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THE LAIRDS OF FIFE.

THE
LAIRDS OF FIFE.

VELUTI IN SPECULUM.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE
LAIRDS OF FIFE.

ERRATA.

VOL. I. p. 298. l. 5. *for existence read career.*

VOL. III. p. 294. l. 16. *for young read old.*

"ARRIVED at Fife-hall, Fifeshire, Mrs Fife."—

"Very swift intelligence, indeed," continued Colonel Brown, laying down the paper, "when we know that the lady has been safe in her own home for the last fifteen days at least."

"Yes, papa. But you know it would not have done to have had her arrival so *very* soon announced. We ladies have got a great deal

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to do before we can conveniently appear to any one, you must understand."

"Of that, my dear," returned Colonel Brown, rather briskly resuming the newspaper, "I must certainly be perfectly aware, especially since it forms so principal a part in the system of all female perfections. But what, after all, is to be done with that curious body, Mrs Fife? Had we not better pay our visit at the Hall to-morrow, and get rid of our necessity at once?"

"The weather favours, too," said Miss Brown; and she rose to adjourn to the music-room, to observe Mr Squeake simper and prelude upon the piano-forte; who suspected *that* to be the surest, as well as the easiest method, of securing both the young lady's money and her good opinion. For this young lady was one of the many young ladies who must provide to themselves every possible advantage of education, without possessing either the taste, genius, or even the inclination to improve it.

"I am so sorry, Mr Squeake," she began; "but it will be impossible for me to take my

lesson to-morrow morning, as I shall be engaged with papa at Fife-hall. You know Mrs Fife?"

"Mrs Fife of Fife-hall?" squeaked in reply Mr Squeake.

The young lady nodded.

"O, perfectly, perfectly! She liked my quadrilles very much indeed." (Immense emphasis on the word indeed).

"She has got other nine sets since that, Mr Squeake," observed the young lady this time rather demurely.

"Ah!—Really?—Well! But she is returned to Fife-hall, is she?"

"Yes; we have just seen it mentioned in the newspaper; and papa intends taking me there, as I told you, to-morrow morning."

"Ah! Why, I daresay I shall be obliged to call there myself to-morrow morning."

"Have you got that piece, Mr Squeake, that was played by Cramer at his last concert?" said the young lady, politely declining to perceive the hint that was, we cannot say exactly, *couched* in the word obliged. For she had no idea of carrying her music-master with her in a

close carriage:—A mode of conveyance, by the way, which she generally inclined to keep all to herself.

“Cramer?—Cramer?—Did you say Cramer? Oh! he’s a great man, Cramer. Shall I give you one of his Studios?”

“Pray do. Number thirty-two—it has such a sweet air in it.”

“Well, I like the first best,” observed Mr Squeake, simpering; “and don’t you like the twenty-third and twenty-sixth?” he ventured to add.

“Play the first over again,” said Miss Brown quietly. “Ah, very fine!”

“Shall I give it you as your lesson to-day, Ma’amselle?” inquired Mr Squeake.

“To-day! Mr Squeake! why my hour is come.” For the hour of emancipation was the one to which she was generally accustomed to allude.

“O, dear! I hope not;” simpered Mr Squeake; and his silly smile sufficed to fill up the remainder of the compliment.

“Why, I don’t know,” cried the young lady,

—for Miss Brown, though pretty general, and even reserved, in her address, had still a habit of occasionally, and by chance, as it were, letting out the truth—“how soon I may die. I am now two-and-twenty, and”——

“Two-and-twenty!!!” interrupted Mr Squeake; “two-and-fifty you mean, Ma’am?” and Mr Squeake simpered once more at his own dexterous incredulity.

“No; just two-and-twenty,” retorted the young lady with *ferté*.

The young lady, however, had pursued a policy in this declaration much deeper than could have been, rationally speaking, expected. She was sick of Mr Squeake; and, as she had it in her mind to make her father dismiss him on the score of non-improvement, she was desirous, at this moment, of placing her age in such a point of view as was most likely to prevent the usual recurrence to such arguments as, “mere child”—“extremely young,”—beginning with, “only consider, sir”—and other namby-pamby palliative palaverations on the part of her instructor. She hesitated, never-

theless, at all times to make herself really older than what she was ; but still anxious to " keep up," she had inadvertently struck upon the truth.

Miss Brown, however, was not by any means tired of being accomplished. She was preparing to resume the harp, and although her new instructor could not expect to meet her before the 13th of December next, that was not enough to prevent her becoming cool upon her at any rate mawkish exertions on the piano-forte. " And then it was at all times so much more graceful to sing to the harp ;"—a sort of satisfaction that was to be the more increased by the opportunity so given of being a witness to her own admiration ;—in other words, to be able to observe the observers, between whom the piano-forte had proved rather a backward, and at other times rather a forward, means of intervention.

At this period, then, Mr Squeake rose. He augured something not quite so accommodating as usual in the looks of his pupil ; and he saw it was necessary to put a stop to his own private means of beguiling time.

On his way, then, from the music-room, Mr Squeake was again entertained with the contents of the celebrated paragraph, and which Colonel Brown happened to be again reciting for the better information of some odd stray glove, who had just called in search of that and similar communications,—“ *Arrived at Fife-hall, Fife-shire, Mrs Fife.*”

Now, of all the oddest of oddities was this same Mrs Fife.

This lady had had a fever for the short period of six-and-forty years, and which, during all that while, no dexterity of management, and no experience of skill, had been ever able to stifle or eradicate. Sometimes, indeed, her physicians complained of “ an over sanguineness of temperament,” “ nervous irascibility,” “ susceptibility of change,” “ liability to external impressions,” &c.; but the true cause of her irreparable distemper was to be found under a sole and single denomination, viz. an ardent, inexhaustible, and insatiable curiosity.

She had not indeed improved like the rest of the human race, when, as walking babies, they

tear in pieces the toys that are given them, in just ratio of proportion, in compliment to their improving sagacity. On the contrary, Mrs Fife was still willing to rip up the repositories of Messieurs Babale and Bagatelle themselves, as well as to reopen all past works of infantine antiquity, rather than repose for an instant in her search for intelligence.

This precocity, we might have said perfection, in the faculty of inquiry, had been neither weakened nor depressed by the cares of life, of a family; or the necessity of taking upon herself some share of her husband's troubles and perplexities. On the contrary, the multiplication and confusion of events had only served the purpose of an agreeable strengthening diet to a mind which was destined never to be at rest, and of an insatiableness of disposition, the diseased cravings of which no fecundity could supply or content.

Her husband had been dead for several years. She had no family, and what was more singular, she had no immediate kindred or relatives. But as with her has been already associated the

highly popular and interesting *nomens* of Fifehall and Fifeshire, it may be as well to state the lady's own particular pretensions to a connexion with these *firms*.

Her defunct husband, then, was of a very old *good* family; and what was still more eminently wonderful in his destiny, he was a lineal descendant. To complete matters, he had finished the descent.

Fifehall, that rest-bed of his ancestry, though built upon the site, and partly with the materials of an old castle or chateau, had been but lately so circumvented and surrounded with debts, bonds, mortgages, and annuities, that unless it was that one single rocky unvegetating promontory, out of which nothing could be had, and out of which nothing could be made, there was not another rood of the baronies of Eppie and Fiddler left free to sustain their hitherto thoughtless inhabitants.

Heaven, however, according to the vulgar adage, when it sends mouths sends meat. At the last gasp, and after the proprietors of the Hall had actually begun to accustom themselves

to its loss by constantly residing at a distance, there arrived from once bounteous India the only surviving kinsman of Mrs Fife.

This gentleman's adventures had been many, but as he had left his native country against his inclination, he had luckily never associated with his exile any ideas of a settled or permanent residence. He had set his mind too upon a long life, and this determination helped his imagination in cherishing the fond hope of again returning to taste of pleasures in its bosom.

The love of our country had need sometimes to carry in it a virtue of importance; for in Mr M'Farlane's case, as with a great many others, it constituted the sole and only good; since, in all other respects, that personage was eminently calculating and wary, and only condescended to esteem those who could in any way prove themselves subservient to his interests.

Returned home, and wallowing in *la richesse*, his joy was extreme when informed, that on account of the most inconceivable *inertix* on the part of his kinswoman's lord and master, Mr Fife, nothing definitive had yet been settled

with respect to the tottering remnants of the great Fifehall estate.

The spectacle of an ancient and honourably connected family sinking under its own importance, was the only signal that was wanted to excite the activity of such a man as M'Farlane. He set about making all the advantages which an immense command of money, and an experienced designing head, can be supposed to obtain. He even sacrificed his time and peace to prolong his already finished harvest of cash-gathering, though he felt that he needed repose; but he sacrificed that, as well as the entire half of his whole realized fortune, to raise the oppressed and prostrate baronies of Eppie and Fiddler again from their chains.

Though Mr M'Farlane had merely amused himself with knocking off a few fetters, commonly called bonds, and had been led on to still farther acts of emancipation, feeling himself a *party*, as it were, in the newly awakened consequence of the Fife family, as it was called; still, however, he ran a risk of becoming *ennuyé*, if, in defect of agricultural knowledge, he had

not resolved upon substituting a new and beautiful pavilion or palace, in place of the old wood-eaten pigeon-stormed cranny, whose once white-harled walls sufficed still to point out to the lands of Fife, and the gentle baronies of Fiddler and Eppie, the drooping standard of their own long obliterated but now returning consequence.

Mr M'Farlane had concluded every thing, and had just set himself down, accompanied by a great many peculiar, and by no means very agreeable habits, to make his friends pay him back, in his own coin, for the great, and to them everlasting benefits which he had so bounteously conferred upon them; when, having caught cold while abroad on foot on a change of weather, he suffered his delighted kinsfolk to put on mourning for him on the tenth day, and the other portion of his fortune to be distributed amongst the rest of his connexions some little time after. The next person carried out of this new raised burying-place was Mr Fife himself, and with his remains were dismissed the nest of state attendants, who had already proved themselves, together with the deceased

Laird and Nabob, by far the most troublesome of Mrs Fife's encumbrances.

Still, however, Fife-hall was a grand place; and, as such, was now very frequently visited and admired by single gentlemen on a tour, and by parties of pleasure on a ramble.

On such occasions, Mrs Fife's activity in the prosecution of her favourite passion surpassed, in inquisitiveness and research, the cleverest efforts of the most dexterous tourists; and if any such general investigators ever gratified themselves with a history of the old family seat, now so sumptuously restored, or fed their wandering fancy with details respecting the pedigree of the family itself, they never failed to deliver up, in recompense, a full and minute history of their own lives, families, avocations, and pursuits. In fact, many young persons had come and gone, and left all that they knew behind them, without having obtained any farther knowledge than the mere outside of a house, which the mistress, having too speedily obtained her ends, would by no means suffer them to enter or investigate.

Mrs Fife was in the habit of spending a winter of five months' duration every year in Edinburgh. But this practice was not at all incompatible with a peregrination to somewhere else; and she was just returned, after a four months' pounce upon the insignificant up-puts of Bath, London, Paris, Brussels, and Brighthelmstone. She had very cogent motives, however, for deferring the public announcement of her arrival at the Hall. It was the touring season. It was therefore proper for her to provide herself against the consequent defection of so many of her friends and neighbours (whom she knew to be a jaunting set) as were now upon their travels, and to oppose some other means of amusement to the monotony that was likely to succeed to her late season of bustle and activity. The same fair weather that should carry off her stale neighbours as a plague, would draw round her haunts a multitude of those wandering encyclopædias with whom the Hall was occasionally infested, and who were now the better encouraged to approach by the Macadamization of a certain cross road, of great shortening importance, in the

vicinity of the Fife-hall gates; and of whose motions, too, she could take so much the more account, under the dexterous and unsuspected surveillance of an incognita—not, as Miss Brown had been led ridiculously to suppose, out of respect to her somewhat disturbed wardrobe, and the mere simple reformation of her dress.

For several weeks Mrs Fife's activity—for by that title we must sometimes name her ever restless spirit of curiosity—was pretty well employed in secretly invading the history of those who, under no such apprehensions, ventured to intrude upon her territories; and in returning the (as we have seen) intended visits of Colonel and Miss Brown, and a few others, not upon their expeditions. But these, and similar troubles, very soon came to an end. Rainy weather set in,—foreign and adventitious sources of enjoyment were exhausted,—ancient friends were again ensconced amidst the multitude of their own more immediate affairs,—and bounds were once more put to her much-loved sphere of enterprise and exertion.

CHAPTER II.

And as an owl that in a barn
Sees the mouse creeping in the corn,
Sits still, and shuts his round blue eyes
As if he slept, until he spies
The little beast within his reach,
Then starts and seizes on the wretch.

Anonymous.

MRS FIFE was likely to become alarmingly bilious under the desperate restraints that were now, as has been mentioned, put upon her rage for inquiry, and had actually sent for some other body's physician, merely from finding herself at fault; when one morning, the mist having cleared, and the sky looking fair, she espied a post-carriage advancing slowly, as if in admiration, upon the approach.

This was a sure sign that none of *her* friends were in the way, and she flitted up to a large

high semicircular window, which was so far a deception, since it really was not what it appeared to represent, viz. a blank window, but which was entirely darkened by a black blind or screen, that did not object, however, on this, as on similar occasions, to suffer itself to be partially drawn aside, in order that its inventrix might the better watch, note, and observe all the motions of the welcome invaders. From this high and exalted position, therefore, could Mrs Fife command the persons of a young lady and gentleman ; and, for the sake of convenience and propriety, as some carriages use a drag-chain, a fattish elderly woman, of a demure, and in all other respects unexplainable, aspect. Having taken these worthies into her mind's eye, Mrs Fife now descended to the interior, in order to attend them from the staircase, and from such other stations as opportunity or convenience might dictate.

The party thus described had proceeded—chaperoned by a dour-looking housemaid ; for Mrs Fife had long since found out, that mere *douce* attendants, though very subservient to her

purpose, were rather less so to her dignity, being in the practice of giving talk, when they expected, and sometimes demanded, to be paid in coin—through several apartments, unconsciously pursuing all the while the shade and shadow of Mrs Fife herself, as she, half-peeping half-listening at every door and aperture, fled on tiptoe at their approach; when, on arriving at a vast room, which only strangers were in the habit of suspecting that there was any use for—being, in fact, the one that Mr M'Farlane had fitted up for the exhibition of his Indian curiosities, that after generations might know, while they admired the wondrous luxuries of the hall, from whence, and by whom, came the wealth—they were unexpectedly, and not very agreeably, intercepted by the following message, delivered by a footman in ordinary to the afore-mentioned Mrs Fife.

“Mrs Fife of Fife-hall's compliments, and begs to be informed to whom her servants have the honour of shewing the house.”

The persons to whom Mrs Fife's servants had the honour of shewing the house stared,

not being at all accustomed, very probably, with the honours of such a reception. But as they had, previous to their arrival, been informed that Mrs Fife of Fife-hall was rather *curious* about visitors,—a term, by the bye, to which more than one meaning might very well be applied,—they gave up the names of “Mrs Dudd, Miss Kicklecackle, and Mr Hochytoch.”

This concession, however well granted, was not found nevertheless to suffice. The footman returned to beg to know—*erratum*, “Mrs Fife begged to know—whether or not the parties, under question, were any relations of her friends, Messrs Hockdock and Company, the great Liverpool merchants; or any kin to Mr Timothy Timber Cackle, the celebrated comedian of ——— theatre?”

The parties were not at all unwilling to acknowledge, that they had never heard of such persons; and Miss Kicklecackle, who had been as yet rather cautious as to how she should demean herself in her new situation, now broke forth into one of her constitutional loud and long continued laughs; amused, though that was

not required, it would seem, by the oddity of her situation, and the singularity to her of the names she had just heard.

They were leaving the house, now chased in their turn by the indefatigable Mrs Fife; who sometimes hovered, agreeably to her plan of operations, so close upon the party's retreat, that when Miss Kicklecackle, like another Mr Pry, suddenly re-entered the last abandoned room for her parasol, she caught not only a glimpse, but a full-face view of a thin, little, active figure, talled by a steeple-crowned cap, in the act of springing into an adjoining closet;—when the former messenger page reappeared, in order to prefer again Mrs Fife of Fife-hall's compliments, and to say that, as she felt satisfied she had had the pleasure of seeing some of the Dudd and the Cackle family somewhere or other before, she could not think of allowing Mrs Dudd or her friends to go away, without first partaking of some little trifling refreshment.

Mrs Dudd gaped, in the excess of her astonishment at being thus forcibly detained, as it were, in so honourable a place, while, like a

sound from the tomb, she sent forth one fearful and impressive "Oh!!!" Mr Hochytoch, still more afraid of detention, prepared, *deo volente*, to walk out as he had walked in; and Miss Kicklecackle went off in another laugh, which surpassed the first in ratio as a mile to an inch; thus intimating, by her extraordinary idiosyncrasy of behaviour, the true loadstone of attraction in Mrs Fife's (upon this occasion) uncommon personal perseverance in her pursuit.

The footman, however, who knew from experience all that was expected from him, had in the meantime gone after Mr Hochytoch, having first pushed the remainder of the party into an adjoining anti-room, in which, but not with any designs of comfort, hung a map of the county, and a tolerable accompanying drawing of the parish of Fiddler, with the seat of detention in the centre.

In this place the group of domestic punchinellos (Mr Hochytoch having been prevailed on to join) had remained about a quarter of an hour or ten minutes, Miss Kicklecackle giving the reins all the while to her incorrigible incli-

nation to laugh, when they were re-shown *en suite* through a private gallery, and next through a pair of grand folding doors, now thrown widely open, into the evening and morning sitting-room of Mrs Fife; whom Miss Kicklecackle could barely recognize obscurely boxed up like a watchful ferret in a corner, and screened and protected by all the splendid and shining *matériel* of a very pompous refreshment table.

“How do you do, Ma’am? How do you do, Sir?” said Mrs Fife; whose preparations, had she herself been absent, would have borne no small resemblance to those of the lady in the closet in the Arabian Night’s Entertainments. —“Willie!” exerting a little sharp, hard voice, and calling back a dwarf attendant of about four feet high;—“Willie, man, can’t you stay and contrive to help the ladies to a seat?”

“I wish I had only your spirits, Miss,” she added, turning quick upon Miss Kicklecackle, who, as she had now begun, was fully prepared to end. “But, perhaps,” and she bestowed

another witch look upon the laughing fair, "you may have got something to divert you, that we, as our Margaret says, dinna just ken of."

"A great deal!" screamed Miss Kicklecackle; and Miss Kicklecackle made a pounce in amongst the nabobian folds of a window-curtain, in order, as it appeared, that she might be free to prolong her exercise by herself.

"It occurs to me as a wonder that she is not terrified," exclaimed Mrs Fife, now turning, with an air of recovered dignity, towards the more insignificant portion of her guests. But, suddenly reflecting on the possible misfortune of scaring them away by any implied resentment on her part, she began to pour out some wine, and next to despatch her dwarf page with a silver tray, containing an untouched, cold, roast turkey, fruits, and pastry. There was a trio table set upon castors, at the service of whosoever chose to acknowledge so gross an appetite as to eat, when not at dinner, animal food; and this machine having been edged in to relieve the page, while he stood attention before the swab persons of Mr Hochytoch and Mrs Dudd,

the *dindon* was forthwith restored to the larger board, dismembered—through the modest policy of the parties, we suppose—of *both* legs.

Mrs Fife threw an elf-look upon her stumpless fowl, while she mechanically muttered to herself, “I should have been mad to have let them away. These originals will outmatch Lord Fiddlefaddle’s eccentrics, as well as every other curiosity he ever saw in his life.—Delightful! How did it happen that I should have been so very fortunate?”

Miss Kicklecackle in the meanwhile kept alternately laughing and sobbing, with her back to the company; and, in utter contempt of Mrs Fife’s attempts to be hospitable, would taste nothing.

“Do you intend by laughing to grow fat, Miss?” Miss Kicklecackle *was* fat.

The Miss began another chorus, which burst all restraint as it approached the end.

Mrs Fife looked,—apprehensive, perhaps, of the end of the world.

“He! he! he! he! he! ha! ha!—ha! ha!!!” repeated the Miss.

“He! he! he! he! he!”—and Mr Hochytoch also began to laugh.

“Most inconceivable!!! O, what would I not give to have Sir James or Lady Methodical here just now!—but I should lose my judgment long before I should have time to send for—Gracious, another set of skirls! I think I had better begin and laugh too—pray, join me, Mrs Dudd.”

“He! he! he! he! he!—ha! ha! ho! *ho!!!*
He! he! he! he! he! ha! ha!—ha!”——stop!
In the gap which the self-dismissed page had left in the folding doors, stood, till now unnoticed, Colonel Brown. Underneath one shoulder, his daughter Cecilia,—the hat of her French governess under the other. And face to face, but somewhat in the shade, Mrs Horn Regular and Lady Methodical.

“Upon my word, this is really a scene!” and looking round in strange surprise, Colonel Brown, leading on his ambuscade battalion, now ventured to enter, though certainly with some reluctance, upon the field of action.

The withering aspect of this force, even when seen from a distance, drove Miss Kicklecackle from her station at the window; Mr Hochytoch and Mrs Dudd from the room; brought two half-demolished drumsticks to the ground, and Mrs Fife to her senses.—The screams of Willie, who had likewise been infected, resounding like a trumpet of victory in some of the adjoining landing-places, completed the enchantment.

Colonel Brown now waited, with no slight degree of satisfaction at finding himself a means in dissolving the show, to be enlightened; and his party, mechanically adopting the same method of obtaining information, looked up to him in silence.

Mrs Fife, however, notwithstanding this second, and, perhaps of the two, the worst pull upon her nerves, did not at all times respect Colonel Brown agreeably to his desires; and she began, once more, to laugh over the scene which she herself had so lately helped to conjure up.

“ Well, ladies ! this is a most extraordinary reception,” said Colonel Brown; and Colonel

Brown seated himself. "What say you, Lady Methodical, eh?"

Lady Methodical hemmed, and turned to Mrs Horn Regular.

Mrs Horn Regular re-echoed her Ladyship's hem, and fixed her still quiet eyes upon the French *gouvernante*.

That lady gave a pathetic shrug, accompanied by a short low squeal, and applied her handkerchief to her face to conceal the love of happy frolic, which, maugre the dignity of her companions, already danced there in glee.

Miss Brown was the first to take up the cudgels. "My dear Mrs Fife, who were these odd creatures now?" she exclaimed, with a pouting lip.

"I really—don't know," replied Mrs Fife; and she wiped away a tear—not, we may guess, in sorrow.

"No?"

"No; it was—but pray be seated all of you—it was only a parcel of people I permitted to see the house."

"Well?"

"And they—O dear! I shall never—he! he!—recover it!"

"Well?" The well was sounded this time by Colonel Brown, and his company at large.

"And they came, as I said, to see the house."

"Strange!" said Miss Brown, who did not think so very much of Fife-hall as to imagine that any body should go to see it.

"Strange! The strangest adventure, my dear, you ever heard of in your life."

"But you know them, don't you? *you* know everybody, Mrs Fife."

"My dear, I was so confounded, I did not even get one, even one poor silly inquiry made."

"Impostors, perhaps," said Lady Methodical.

"They must have been very amusing ones, I should think," said Mrs Horn Regular.

"A part of the character, perhaps. Hem!" added Lady Methodical.

"If I could only find them out!" cried Mrs Fife.

"Hush!" interrupted Colonel Brown, as his daughter and another of the party were going to say something fierce with contempt for the

members now at the horn. "Is there no chance, my dear Mrs Fife, of our becoming better acquainted with these oddities?"

"Do you think by going after them I should be able to, overtake them, Colonel?" re-interrogated Mrs Fife.

"Why, I—should almost think so;" slowly answered Colonel Brown, taking his breath, and also his revenge, in having once more settled her upon tenter-hooks.

"They are going to St Andrews:"—Mrs Fife had been informed of *that* piece of programme before the party had altogether alighted at her door—"And I shall go there to-morrow; nay, this instant. But perhaps I shall catch them at the gate;—pray ring, Miss Brown.

While Miss Brown was preparing, with all lady-like grace and decorum to obey this rather unwelcome summons, Mrs. Fife was on her way, in person, to issue out the necessary commands. She reflected, however, on the feebleness of her powers either to detain or to interfere any further in the motions of the punchinellos; but, still bent upon a better acquaint-

tance with them, she despatched the groom of the antichamber on horseback, with an ample apology for the manner in which she and they had been disturbed; terminating with an invitation to spend a whole day at the Hall, should they happen to return again by the same road. To this message Mrs Fife added an injunction to 'her footman himself, which was, to keep at a distance, and upon no account to re-appear, till he had first seen her present visitors fairly out of sight.

She found her company on her return in happy active discourse about no less a personage than Mr Squeake.

"He has so much taste," said Mrs Horn Regular.

"A good deal of fiery execution, too," said Colonel Brown.

"O, it's *all* execution," said his daughter.
"He has no more ear, I believe, than a cat."

"And perhaps not much more taste," said Lady Methodical.

"O, he has not the *least* pretensions to taste," again observed Mrs Horn Regular; who for-

got, in her love for a little regular chit-chat, the very different assertion she had just made before.

“And then he plays so”—loud, Miss Brown would have said. But at that instant Lady Methodical came in with—“soft, one cannot possibly hear what he is about.”

“O, we all know it’s horrid,” cried Miss Brown; glad to get so easily quit of her mistake. For it was her particular pride to be thought in her manners to resemble that first-rate pattern of the proper, Lady Methodical.

“Horrid! do you say, Miss Brown?” cried Mrs Fife; now fairly darning in a word. “You never saw such pretty things as his last compositions in your life.—Here they are!” and she drew forth Mr Squeake’s last set of fashionable quadrilles, with waltz, dedicated with all due honour to herself. “Do try them, Cecilia,” she added, approaching the piano-forte; “I have such a desire to hear them well played. I was even, do you know, so curious about them, that I began to re-learn the gamut myself, only that I might be able

to read them, and hear what they were like. But I could never get beyond this chord upon B flat"—suiting the action to the word—"the rest sounds perfect nonsense, don't you think?"

"Because you do not observe that you should be taking the bass clef all this time," said Miss Brown, sliding into the now abdicated seat. And she jingle-jangled through a hotch-potch set of mawkish tunes, stolen, imitated, and mixed up from among all the composers in the known world, we suppose.

"Very pretty," said Mrs Horn Regular, observing the dedication.

"O beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Brown, who was at all times happy to praise any thing which she had herself the merit of performing.

"Pray, Mademoiselle, what do *you* think?" said her father, still willing to do the polite, especially with the young ladies.

"Ah! très charmante! très charmante! Voila, Madame Methodiky, cette passage. Ah! that be it! that be it! Tit tit—titty—teetty—teetty"——

—"Colonel Brown," interrupted Lady Methodical, "I should be almost inclined to think that it is three o'clock."

"Three o'clock! O surely not *three* o'clock!" exclaimed Miss Brown, rising from the instrument.

"I must be a quarter fast then, at that rate," said Mrs Horn Regular.

"And I, ten minutes slow," said Colonel Brown.

"Perhaps neither of you are right," said Lady Methodical; "I make it a point to have my watch always exact to a minute."

"*My* watch has never gone since the first week I got it," cried Miss Brown; "but you see I always wear it, and always maintain it to be in the right, for it certainly never *goes* wrong."

"*We* have gone wrong to-day, however, my dear," returned Lady Methodical. "Do you observe that shower?"

"O, gracious! Antoinette!" exclaimed the young lady; "Pray look here! wasn't I right, now, in calling it a most horrid"—

—“ O, most *horrid*.”

“ Now, how *can* you interrupt me, Mademoiselle? It puts me so much in mind of the time when I was under your orders. I never attempted to say any thing, whether serious or funny, but you always snatched the words from my mouth, and said them yourself. So rude !”

“ She will soon fade,” said Mademoiselle Antoinette to herself in revenge. Mademoiselle Antoinette hoped to prevent further wrath in the meantime, by a smile full of blandishment and *adoucissement*.

“ But you certainly did torment me, Mademoiselle,” continued Miss Brown, whose wrath was *not* prevented by such concessions, and who was at that moment considering, in bitterness of spirit, the disagreeable necessity of having to offer Mrs Horn Regular and Lady Methodical seats in her carriage; and the misery of hurling round the country cramped up with four in a chariot.

“ Telemache ! Telemache ! Telemache !” returned the Mademoiselle with an inconceivable rapidity of articulation; “ Ah, Meese ! Meese !”

“ Pugh, pugh, I think Telemache only fit for

a nursery book," speedily retorted Miss Brown. "I am now accustomed, I am happy to say, to make a better choice where I intend to be instructed. There's Almacks, Vivian Grey, and Granby:—you need not stare, Mademoiselle; you know you wearied of *Telemaché* more than I did, and you gave a good proof of it when you prevailed on papa to steal away the book from us."

Mademoiselle's "gumption" saw nothing in this tart speech, but a pretty little anecdote in which she had herself played the heroine; and she set up a half-strangled giggle, which her *ci-devant* pupil first joined, and afterwards interrupted, by calling Mrs Fife's attention again to the weather.

"Quite a storm, my dear Mrs Fife."

"Only a few refreshing drops," said Mrs Fife, lifting her unsettled eyes—(which wearied exceedingly to see the party depart, as well as her anxiously expected messenger return)—to a wet mass of clouds and vapours.

"In the shape of a shower-bath, you mean," added Colonel Brown. "Cecilia, my love, don't you see that Mrs Fife wishes us away?"

Mrs Fife did not choose to observe that Colonel Brown spoke with some degree of *ferté*. She was busy prying into the outworks of Miss Brown's tiny French watch.

"We must get through as we can," observed Lady Methodical. "My dear Mrs Fife, we must bid you a good morning."

"O pray, don't go," cried Mrs Fife, in a tone of pretended entreaty—"just yet," she added; politely, however, shewing the way to the staircase: "I would not for the world any of you got wet.—Is Colonel Brown's carriage there?" raising her voice into a sharp sounding bugle. "It is so shabby in you all to go away, and leave that nice luncheon, too," she continued, advancing towards the grand entrance-door, and boldly facing, or rather needling, through a pelting shower, that blew direct through the salon-goth in her face. "It's nothing—nothing to speak of."

"Good morning," said the party thus dismissed, as they severally turned away in order to get into their carriage; Lady Methodical's garden chair having driven off on account of the rain.

“ Good morning, Lady Methodical ; good morning, Mrs Regular ; good morning, Cecilia ; good morning, Colonel :—it *is* a little blowy, I see ; but I trust you will all get home safe.”

These compliments on the part of the *dame de maison* were answered by the carriage-party pulling up the glass, and by Colonel Brown putting spurs to his horse,—whom she now felt, like a cat that plays with a string, a sudden wish to recapture and detain.

“ It is really stormy, Colonel,” said Mrs Fife, as he darted past ; “ but I hope——O, there he comes ! Well, John ! well, well, well, well ; what, what about them ? Quick—speak—what about them ? Were the three all together ? and what did they say ? Did you give them my message ?” John nodded. “ Well, and what was their answer ? Speak, quick, man, speak : what answer did they send ?”

“ They sent no answer.”

“ What !!! Send no answer ?”

“ Only their compliments, Ma’am.”

—“ Well ?”

“ And, that they should”——

—“ Well, John, well ?”

"Should not again return this road."

"So, so, so, so, so, so.—Tell Mrs Gregory I want to see her immediately."

"Well, Mrs Gregory, *you* will be able to throw some light on the subject, won't you? John found out that these strange people who came here this morning were going to St Andrews; and you of course would sift out all the rest."

The housekeeper shook her head.

"What! did the fellow not speak after he drank the porter?"

"Mem, I believe he was bribed. I never knew such an oyster of a man in my life."

"He told you, however, where they came from, who they were, and——but your toothache seems very bad, Mrs Gregory."

"O bad, very bad," said Mrs Gregory; whose toothache was the recollection of having forgot to pay any attention to either the man or the matter; and who was very busy, moreover, at that instant, in facilitating the progress of two eatable manufactures, called crab apples and apricot jam.

“ I have it ! ” cried Mrs Fife, as the door closed : “ I owe a visit to old Lady Lumberfield, and I dare say more than a dozen to that half-pay man, Captain Sham, and his wife : to-morrow morning I shall be off ; ” and she rung for her maid to assist in preparing the necessary *materiel* for her visits to Lady Lumberfield and Captain Sham, whom she intended to condemn, however, to act the part of ‘ cat’s paws ’ in her mighty design to overtake, and bring back, the volatile Miss Kicklecackle, and her more demure companions, Mr Hochytoch and Mrs Dudd.

CHAPTER III.

On a trouvé plus de difficulté qu'on ne croyait.

INSTEAD of indulging in gentle morning slumbers, after the vast fatigues and somewhat voluminous transactions of the former day, Mrs Fife was up, dressed, and, after a very early, and rather a hasty breakfast, was advanced two and a half miles upon the great little road leading to St Andrews. She had laid a toil to come at the true character and dispositions of her late eccentric guests, who, as we have seen, had suddenly escaped her clutches, and at the very moment, too, when she supposed herself most secure of their company. The parties had disentangled themselves also in such a manner as served only to increase the fever of excitement which they had proved the innocent, though

primary means of occasioning ; and for this fault were they now to have the benefit of a chase, which was, to all appearance, likely to drive them over to Holland.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Mrs Fife, urged on by so many fomenting occasions of excitement, should, like another Elizabeth of Siberia, set out in search of a termination to her difficulties ; or that, bent on affairs of importance, she should despise the dewy efforts of the drizzly dawn, when satisfied as to the good condition of her close carriage.

But, nevertheless, even amidst the greatest undertakings, how many little insignificant and unimportant sentiments and wishes break in upon the due performance of the grand transaction ? Have not the most arduous, persevering and energetic, been suddenly seized, like Mrs Gregory, with the toothache, with a headache, with a desire to experience, in the way of their vocation, some little petty personal comfort or gratification ; which, it is to be hoped, may rather assist than disturb the wished-for completion of their intentions ? Mrs Fife, while

seated in quiet, and, of course to her, by no means agreeable contemplation, of the pitter-patter of her two well fed nags,—in the cold, too, of a very raw, slashy morning,—espied the well-known sheltered plantations of the venerable Mrs Ogilvie, whose grand-niece was an occasional visitor at the Hall ; and, when a calm fit occurred, was a very great favourite. This young lady possessed considerable personal attractions, and a disposition which had the rare perfection of being free from all mean or malicious sensations. Miss Leslie had a natural character of benevolence about her, which sought to excuse, if it could not justify the ill conduct of others ; and a timidity of disposition, that neither found fault with ingratitude, nor the sometimes contemptuous insolence of pre-supposed superiority. Her connexions—like those of the rest of the world, if we were ever told the truth—were made up of both high and low ; of rich and of poor ; of people of talent ; of people whose ignorance was to be blushed for ; and of persons famous for neither one thing nor another. Her fortune, as her aunt was merely a liferentrix, amounted,

like that of a great many other young ladies who are said to "have money," to just two thousand six hundred pounds. Her accomplishments, too, like those of most very accomplished young persons, consisted in being able to draw very badly; dance very well; sing so so; and play on the piano and harp merely correctly and in time—to read French; and to write a pretty letter.

Mrs Fife, with all the suspicious activity of mind of a bustling woman of the world, had taken it for granted, that to pay court to whosoever might preside at the Hall, must form a principal motive in the politics of a young person so precisely situated as Miss Leslie; and had, accordingly, more than once endeavoured to prove the existence of such a system in that young lady's behaviour, by many lavish attentions, and by as many undeserved neglects.

Miss Leslie, however, had still continued neither to expect the one, nor to resent (as was intended) the other. She had never made any objections to Mrs Fife's gratifying herself as she pleased; and was, therefore, never disappointed

by any unexpected discontinuance of her favours. In the end, she had taught Mrs Fife herself an example of charity, gentleness, and good-will; and had now established herself in that lady's otherwise vacillating favour, in a manner that was not again to be disturbed. Mrs Fife, whom we left dabbling along upon a splashy road, was therefore but too happy to suspend her mad-like expedition, to pass an hour or two with so young and amiable a friend.

"My dear Mrs Fife, I am so happy to see you!" exclaimed Miss Leslie with delight, and taking both Mrs Fife's hands in hers. "How could you think of leaving your paradise, and, in this wet day too, to visit such a bye-corner as this?"

"On my way to the Shams, my dear," returned Mrs Fife, rather brusquely, enclosing herself within the outstretched arms of a large easy chair.

"Then you must have some refreshment, my dear Ma'am," observed Miss Leslie, turning away to conceal a sudden and rather painful feeling of self-reprobatation, for having so rashly

concluded the lady's journey to have been undertaken entirely upon *her* account;—for Miss Leslie and her aunt were out of the line of both Colonel Brown and the Methodicals.

Mrs Fife, whose sagacity was of a quality sufficiently alert, quickly perceived the slight blush of self-reproof, and immediately sought to dispel it. “Sophia, my dear,” she said, conferring upon her what she intended should be one of her sweetest smiles; “you are at all times a great deal kinder to me than I deserve. And I know nobody whose company and conversation I so much and so heartily appreciate.—But don't be teasing your keys for me, my dear; I couldn't think of any thing till I come back, when I mean to stay a night with you; and—but I am really forgetting myself—I have not another moment to stop. Pray, how is your aunt?”

“Pretty well, thank you.”

“You mean—she is as usual, eh?”

“Yes.”

“How does she sleep?”

“Tolerably.”

“What does she eat?”

"She is not particular."

"When does she breakfast?"

"Generally about nine."

"*Exactly* at nine?"

Miss Leslie nodded assent.

"Is she allowed eggs?"

"Sometimes."

"Is her room above this, pray?"

"It is."

"Is it cold?"

"No, pretty comfortable."

"Always a fire?"

"Only in winter."

"*Only* in winter!"

"Only in winter."

"How many windows has it?"

"Two."

"Two! why two?"

Miss Leslie was about to submit some sort of explanation to this really ridiculous interrogative, when Mrs Fife again interposed—
"My dear, sweet girl!" she exclaimed, "you really must not ask me any more questions: I have no time for them. And you see, as the

Shams have not as yet been informed of my coming, it will be necessary for me to arrive early, in order to give them due time to compose themselves:—You know they are no great things these Shams. So no regrets,—(where are you, Thomas?)—my dear; you know I am coming to spend a day with you, and you are coming next week to pass a month with me. Your aunt, poor body, likes so much to see you visit about, before you become, as she says, laid up like her; and then she has good old Mrs Caretake to look after her—a fit name for such a fit nurse.” And Mrs Fife, bringing up a squadron of queries which she had hitherto kept in reserve, but which however she did not wait to hear answered, went off.

Mrs Fife had had sufficient leisure to regret the very comfortable Residenz of Mrs Ogilvie and her grand-niece, when—(after a very tedious drive, interrupted only by the still more tedious and uneasy questions of the lady herself, as she made her coachman incessantly dismount to enforce such never-ending inquiries as, “What house was that about a mile to the right? and

whose gate was that on a little to the left? to whom belonged the Irish jaunting car which they had just met?" &c. &c. Then, "whether the M'Caichneys of Knock-Davie were any connexions or not of the M'Caichneys of Knock-Spavie? and whether the M'Gauchans were any kith or kin to the M'Glaushans?"—her carriage stopped before the little cast-metal gate of a cold-looking, genteelish modern country-house; of which, by the way, any one might guess that the walls were size-painted, and the wood-work still bare; having in front a small scrap of a garden-plot, luxuriant only in pebbles, stumpy July-flower, and ill-thriven marigolds.—This enchanted spot was situate somewhere or other upon the sea-coast, in the near vicinity of St Andrews.

The coachman—Mrs Fife had only taken her coachman—having rapped, and Mrs Sham being declared to be within, that lady was accordingly ushered into a very flimsily furnished draw-room, the shewy carpet of which was safely, though barely, covered, by a long unbleached web, apparently fresh from the weaver's shuttle;

the chairs happed after the same style ; as was in like manner an untrodden rug, which announced that Waterloo-blue was the favoured shade of the viewless gear.

Our friend Mrs Fife waited—really waited. Not that she particularly cared for her friend Captain Sham, whose post it had once been to divert her with long stories, before the day on which he first presented arms to that flimsy woman his wife ; but because, finding that she was not at Fife-hall, she felt averse to the idea of setting up her court of inquiry in the face of a public inn. Be that as it may, it is not the first time that the spirit, as well as the forms of justice, have been disturbed by the jarring clash of female conveniencies coming unexpectedly into contact.

Mrs Sham sent up—for the drawing-room was up stairs—a message, “ that she was *not* at home, having just gone out, &c. ; and, that Captain Sham was not expected home before evening.”

Mrs Fife gave a look to the “ fine day,” which had induced Captain Sham to stay abroad

until the evening, or his wife to go out at all; for the dull wettish morning had now resolved into a settled rain—and another look to the girl who brought the dismissal, whose blushing looks expressed, in unmistakable language, a full detection of the feint or *ruse*. The ingratitude of the parties had now, however, occurred to awaken her contempt, and she prepared to make the much wished-for retreat; the rapidity of which, nevertheless, like her own very landable, though rather disproved intentions, was destined to be, for a little at least, intercepted. Mrs Fife saw, in passing through a very uncomfortable looking salon, adorned with the stucco imitations of Canova, the vomitory of *another* very smart apartment standing cautiously, and, as it appeared, purposely agee.

“I wonder”—and she forgot in that one word the possible ambuscade of the parties who had just announced, by so many astonishing (we cannot call them *white*) lies, their unqualified desire to see, as well as to hear, of the forthcoming dislodgement—“what sort of place their dining-room can be?” and Mrs Fife, des-

patching the servant girl with some trifling orders to her coachman, gently pushed her head into the apartment; and there she as gently discovered—Mrs Sham herself, in a dowdy dress, busily engaged in making up a piece of silk that seemed to have been at least twice dyed, and in imposing from time to time an impressive “*hush*” upon the now quiet romps of two very active and mischievous looking babes.

Mrs Fife drew in—but quickly darted back again, to detect Captain Sham’s own bare brushed hat, cleaned shamois gloves, walking-cane, and snuff-box, resting opposite upon the torn hide of a worn-out cabinet piano-forte. Mrs Fife would have pounced back a second time, in order to compass a table, tight over which was drawn a fine but vulgar orange-patterned cloth, of which she had just been able to catch the edge; and behind which she did not *merely suspect* the husband of the lady himself to be ensconced—but at that important instant her double sight had caught a glimpse of the returning maid, carrying the desired umbrella aloft,

under whose unsatisfactory shade she was now to have the honour of returning to her carriage.

“Thankful nobody noticed me!” said Mrs Fife to herself, while giving orders to rest the horses at St Andrews, on her route to Lady Lumberfield’s, in whose dominions, should nothing further occur, she was now inclined to seek refuge; and reflecting seriously on the consequences to which her late discovery might have exposed her—for the day’s excursion was now beginning somehow or other to cause her spirits to flag—she rode away infinitely contented with her own management and dexterity. But somebody *had* noticed her. The most distant signification of noise—such as the steps of a person moving in the room above, an inclination to cough in descending a pair of stairs, or even sounds of a much slighter nature and significance—often prove sufficient to awake the activity of a woman who is not deaf, an abstracted enthusiast in devotion, or in love.

Mrs Captain Sham had traced, from her seat of duty, every motion of the foe; had noted the

suspicious pause at the dining-parlour door; had perfectly comprehended her guest's pretext for sending away the maid on a message to her coachman; and had seen the head when it first popped forth, uncertain at the moment where it was to fix. But it was Mrs Sham's policy—after having been so unexpectedly delivered up, through means of the very stratagem by which she had hoped more easily to have come at the intentions of so extraordinary a person as Mrs Fife—to put on the true appearance of perfect unconsciousness; and, by virtue of this management, to compel the enemy to understand the little success she was likely to meet with on a second invasion. For as Mrs Sham did not find it so convenient now-a-days to transport her family to such a place as Fife-hall in the style she wished, there was no occasion—and her husband was of the same opinion—that she should burden herself with any unnecessary recollections of former kindness and hospitality; though Captain Sham himself had hitherto pretended to do so, under an expectation, however, now luckily set

at rest, of finding cheaper quarters somewhere in Mrs Fife's immediate neighbourhood.

In the mean time, Mrs Fife's campaign in the kingdom was likely to end where it had, properly speaking, begun—with the Shams. On her arrival at St Andrews, she was informed that the party she was come so far in quest of had, after viewing all the lions that were worth, proceeded on their tour that night; and were by this time, in spite of all their *gauche* stupidity, utterly beyond all trace or reach. And further, that Lady Lumberfield was at present, though little in the habit of visiting abroad, gone from home. Mrs Fife considered at first, whether or not she should stay out the night where she was, and next day take in, on her return, either Castle Regular, or Methodical House; for, once on the *qui vive*, it was proper that she should glean the whole transactions of the country on her route. But the scheme was doubtful. The persons about her seemed either to be in a hurry, or too deaf to understand what was meant. She had been where she was before; and she was

confined by the weather from walking out in search of either news or intelligence.

If the day had been long, the coming even' appeared to be still more so. She consulted with her coachman, whom she questioned and cross-questioned to his heart's content; while he could only undertake, in answer, to carry her back to the point from whence she had last set out. She landed therefore once more with Miss Leslie; with whom she was now but too happy to pass, though half-expired, the promised night.

Next day brought both ladies to Fife-hall; and Miss Kicklecackle, Mrs Dudd, and Mr Hochy-toch, were permitted to continue to pursue their inclinations in peace. Their persecutrix was even artful enough to make it be believed that she had now forgotten them, and that the young lady she had now produced had been the real and ostensible object of her journey; while the importunity of other events, together with the disgust she experienced at the false conduct of her friends the Shams, helped to serve at least the purpose, if not of a *quietus*, yet of

laying the late inquiry upon a still more settled foundation.

Mrs Fife's expedition, however, gave trouble, as shall be told, in some other quarter.

"I have bad news for you, Cecilia," said Colonel Brown one morning, coming in rather early from his partridge-shooting.

"Very bad news," he continued, stooping slowly to unbutton a pair of very slightly bedag-gled shamois gaiters. "Worse, even, than the arrival of Mrs Fife, Fife-hall, Fifeshire; though pretty nearly connected with that august personage:—that girl Leslie is positively to remain with her, I hear, for another month."

Cecilia gave a start, not of surprise, but of envy and dislike desirous to be heard, and pierced her finger with the wax-headed needle with which she was engaged in dobbling a pair of fancy hand-screens, designed for Lady Methodical; or, should a certain person come in the way, for the Honourable Miss Lætitia Alicia Aloof.—"Then, papa, you cannot send her the invitation after this?" And she looked to

the little sprinkling of blood that oused gently through the puny wound upon her finger.

“That is just what I have come in to consult you about, my dear;—though, in fact, I could not expect to do any thing with that nonsensical percussion.—Mrs Fife, you know, expects to dine here some of these days. She has called at Bertie, and she has reason to expect to be invited. I hope Miss Brown is aware of this?”

“I *know* she has,” sighed Miss Brown, who felt aware, to her sorrow.

“And therefore I am mightily afraid we’re in for it. Lady Methodical and the Horn Regulars have accepted; and we cannot be inviting them again, you know, merely for the purpose of meeting that body Fife: and yet, it would be no entertainment for her without. You are aware, too, my dear, that these ladies—bless me! it’s very damp—are the only people who can keep her in awe, and that, if she comes alone, she comes to torment me out of my life.”

“But then, papa, the Miss,—that horrible Miss!”

Her father—for there was the knotty point—

drew his chair nearer the fire, and looked up with his hands resting upon both knees, in the mixed hope and expectation of hearing the Miss, as his daughter had pleased to design her, very industriously taken to pieces; and at the same time, through his commendatory preface, to know that she was forthwith to be, nevertheless, admitted to the forthcoming party.

“She is such a *disagreeable* creature, too,” continued Miss Brown; “and, besides, is neither known to Mrs Horn Regular nor to Lady Methodical. She will play and sing, too, to introduce herself, and then I may as well, I suppose, go to bed.”

“A horrid nuisance! her and her music both, to be sure,” returned her papa, swinging himself to and fro upon the chair-back. “But, my dear, as she is not *known* to be a performer, and as I have heard her chaperone, Mrs Fife, say that she could, upon occasion, make up a fourth at whist, I think we might contrive matters.”

“It is a terrible business!—terrible business!” said the young lady. “And then the

Honourable Charles Suttie to be there ; and the two Hyndfords from —— Castle, who have been invited everywhere. Oh ! papa, it will never, *never* do."

"Is that candidly speaking your opinion, Miss Brown?"

Miss Brown yawned ; and in such a manner as to intimate that, right or wrong, she would never swallow any other.

"Then, my dear, it must be as you think proper. Only, as that West India property has never yet come my way, and the Horn Regulars are such very expensive people, I *really could* have wished that we might have been able to put in Mrs Fife amongst them, without the necessity of a double entertainment. And then, those questions about that uncle of mine, who was hanged at the yard-arm for striking his commanding officer, about whom she never fails to bother me when alone, merely because I have never yet given her any exact detail of the circumstances."

"Well, papa, we can *have* Mrs Fife," returned the young lady with considerable *esprit* ; "and I should think, too, without being com-

pelled to invite her companion. We can call with the card ourselves; and then that disagreeable Miss Leslie will see that we have no intentions of inviting her."

"It will not do, my dear," sighed Colonel Brown; "though I have as little taste to be drilled into what I dislike as yourself. But, you know, Mrs Fife, amongst other freaks, once requested us to be allowed to bring her before; and she will doubtless take our consent then as a precedent for so doing on the present occasion.—But don't distress yourself so very much, Cecilia; the girl is not destined, through any manœuvre, to be *your* acquaintance: And as she does not come very often upon these long visits to Mrs Fife, such an accident, we will take care, shall never happen again."

"But then, if she should make up to the Methodicals, or the Horn Regulars, papa?" exclaimed Miss Brown, as much in fear as in doubt.

"There is no danger of that, my dear. Their good sense and tact will enable them to distinguish the scale of consideration in which

we receive her. And then, could we not have Mademoiselle Antoinette to keep her employed?"

"A most excellent plan! But will Lady Methodical"—for it seems that young lady had gone over to the Methodicals till Miss Brown should take it into her head to extend, or, more properly speaking, to revise, any of her accomplishments—"relish such a thing? You know she never breaks through her rules; and thinks, at any rate, that Mademoiselle and I have got a great deal too much to say to each other."

"Well, then, we can have Mr Squeake. He is still in the country, they say."

"Mr Squeake! papa?"

"Why not, my dear?"

"Mr Squeake! Why, I am sure I sing much better myself."

"But don't you require an assistant—a drudge?"

"Ah! true! But you don't know, perhaps, that Mr Squeake seldom or never comes here now-a-days."

"Why, unless it was making over to him every now and then some poor man's rent, I

really profess to know nothing about how you two happen to manage.—But proceed, my dear.”

“O nothing, nothing, papa. I only gave him his dismissal, because I knew that he wished to teach amongst the Methodicals. But I have taken care, with the help of Mademoiselle,—who is a good obliging fool, though a little provoking sometimes,—to keep him out there, as well as out of every other place.”

“Ha ! ha ! ha !” And Colonel Brown was pleased to indulge himself in a short facetious laugh at this praise-worthy instance of Christian activity. “Well, I see how it is. We are to have Mademoiselle Antoinette, and no Mr Squeake. Now you may think yourself very happily circumstanced in having so little to mind. Recollect, for instance, the grand *dejeuné*, at which we expected the Aloofs, who did not pass within a mile of the house, and which was all eat up by a band of half-pay officers who arrived by chance. Think again of the concert, to which the professional people were invited the one night, and the company the other. Think of the ball given in honour

of a lady, who was that very night seized with an incurable cold; and of the champagne dinner with French fish, to the man who had just the day before died. But I had forgot that these trifling incidents belonged only to your mother's day, though they ought to impress upon you, nevertheless, the necessity of being content, where only a little, and that an insignificant little, ails."

"Well, papa, how do you like this screen?" for Miss Brown had resumed her work the moment her father began to talk, and had moreover continued in an enviable state of blissful ignorance, during the remainder, or rather throughout the whole of his harangue.

"Very pretty, my dear; and more difficult to me than the storming of a redoubt, I do think."

"Brave men are always diffident, papa."—Colonel Brown had neither proved himself brave nor diffident.

"Undoubtedly, my love; and I wish we could get other people only to imitate us: Mrs Fife, for instance, and that piece of idle presumption, Miss Leslie."

“ Pray don't mention them, papa. Mrs Fife always gives me a headache, and Miss Leslie's very name makes me perfectly nervous.”

“ Have you time to execute the notes before dinner ?” said papa, looking at his watch.

Miss Brown began preparing the paraphernalia of the writing-desk.

“ Miss Leslie's card must form a separate despatch, my dear.”

“ O, of course, papa, and I shall take care that it shall be sufficiently polite.” Colonel Brown retired to his dressing-room, and Miss Brown having written out Mrs Fife's card agreeable to the ceremony usual upon all such formidable occasions, composed the following very trite, though sufficiently polite, despatch for her friend :—

“ Colonel and Miss Brown take the liberty of
“ addressing to Miss Leslie the accompanying
“ card ; and beg leave to hope, that they may
“ be permitted the great pleasure of seeing her
“ at Bertie-House on the fourteenth, along with
“ Mrs Fife.”

This note carefully sealed, and the others open, was despatched to Fife-hall by a servant

in high dress—a sort of hint to the inhabitants of the Hall, that they were expected to present themselves in a style of corresponding magnificence.

CHAPTER IV.

Scire volunt secreta domûs, atque inde timeri.

JUVENAL.

“SIZE ACE! was it?” cried Mrs Fife, addressing Miss Leslie, who was seated on the opposite side of a backgammon table. “Size ace, did you say?” and she briskly rattled the dice-box in that young lady’s face. “I wonder what I shall get this time? Deuces!!! (making the throw). Deuces! what in the world am I to do with them?—Let me see: Well, I think I shall play them in.—Or no—stop! My dear, do you intend to try the back-game?”

“Only to save my gammon,” replied Miss Leslie, looking quietly upon her game.

“And why do you desire *only* to save your gammon?” reinterrogated Mrs Fife.

“Why, I really don’t know.”

"Now, if you'll not think it rude in me, Miss Leslie, I should like *very much* to know."

"Well, then, you see," answered Miss Leslie, now very much puzzled—"You see, I—— in fact, I do not know."

"Now, you will no doubt think it very odd in me, my dear, but I *can not* play another single throw, till you positively inform me what you mean by *only* saving the gammon."

"The truth is, my dear Mrs Fife," said Miss Leslie gently, and vainly endeavouring to allay the fever which she had so very unintentionally conjured up, "that I know very little—*very* little of the game; and on that account"——

—"On what account?" here interrupted her antagonist.

Miss Leslie went on. "On that account I could not expect to be successful in escaping your men; seeing that they lay so conveniently ready to"——

—"To what? to what?" again eagerly interrupted Mrs Fife.

"To"——

—"Hush! hush! Sophia. Hush, hush, hush,

hush, hush ! I think I hear a horse." And Mrs Fife threw box, dice, and all, into the board.

Miss Leslie laid down her dice-box in a sort of good-natured despair, and Mrs Fife ascended to her (on such occasions) favourite station, behind the large balcony window.

There was a long pause ; during which Colonel Brown's servant made up to the house, and in a second or two more Mrs Fife's active little foot was heard hurrying down the unconscious stairs. Another pause, followed by a slight shuffle, and then the closing of a door in the vicinity of Mrs Gregory's room, announced that some piece of intelligence or another had now in that quarter been received.

The sound *did* proceed from Mrs Gregory's room. Desirous of overhearing what was the very next moment to be openly communicated to her, Mrs Fife, or rather the heroine of the black window, had, in the first ardour of her impatience, proceeded a little too far ; for she had just encountered Colonel Brown's servant, who, taking assurance from his mission, had advanced directly in search of the house-

keeper's apartments, and who, espying what he conceived to be one of the female domestics of the house, had made bold to give chase; and indeed must have succeeded in the pursuit, had not Mrs Fife, by an effort of singular agility, darted past, and sprung into the adjoining room, commonly called Mrs Gregory's own apartment.

"Oh! oh! Mrs Gregory!" she exclaimed, "I have had such a fright! have made such an escape!—But go and find out what the fellow wants—and, do you hear, Mrs Gregory, see that he be well entertained.—You know how very anxious I am to hear all about my friends at Bertie."

Mrs Gregory went out. "Well, John, my man—hem—what news have you brought with you, eh?"

Her look of placid confidence reassured the somewhat startled John, and, without attending to her inquiry, he made direct for the well-known apartment; behind the door of which Mrs Gregory had just time to entrench herself, ere he approached to force admission.

“ Who have you got there, I say, mistress ?” demanded John, making an effort to get in.

“ It’s my mistress ; it’s Mrs Fife !” cried Mrs Gregory, in consternation.

“ Mrs Fife ! is it ? well well then, let’s see her, let’s see her.”

“ What ! don’t you believe me, you insolent puppy ?”

“ No, I don’t.”

“ Then get away from this door, will you ?”

But the swain had hitherto had too much experience of the comforts of that seat of civil inquisition, to be so easily diverted from his present attempt ; and he replied in a style of proper gallantry—“ Get away from the door, eh ? O, yes, if you’ll first let me in on the other side.”

“ You provoking devil, you !” cried Mrs Gregory, in a voice which seemed apprehensive of calling witnesses to the scene of contest. And she continued to oppose strength of fist to strength of feet.

John was about to retire, after a pretty vigorous effort, in which he had nearly succeeded

in dislodging the large body of Mrs Gregory from its place, when a sharp squeak from somebody within—and who could be no other than the dear object of his pursuit—excited him to a still more desperate attack. Mrs Gregory was accordingly borne aside; the door flew open; and in an easy chair, immediately opposite the door of strife, sat, in all the horrors of anxious expectation for the result—Mrs Fife.

There was a dead pause. Mrs Gregory ran in pretended fright to hide herself; while the man, with a sort of palsied effort, drew forth from his side coat-pocket the cards—of apology he hoped—of invitation from Miss Brown; and which Mrs Fife, with an appearance of displeasure which she by no means felt, now condescended to put forth her shrimp hand to receive.

“O, no, you needn’t go away!” she exclaimed, eagerly devouring the open cards as the petrified man awkwardly attempted to slink off. “No, no! Mrs Gregory, there, may have something to say to you first; and perhaps an answer may be required for these cards. At all events, we must just see what is in this,” she

added, gazing wishfully upon the one that was sealed and directed to her friend Miss Leslie; “though, I must confess, I think the servants’ hall might have contented you. In the mean time, you may give him something to drink, Mrs Gregory; for I dare say he may be a little tired after his gambols.”

And so saying she prepared, not to rejoin her late antagonist Miss Leslie, but to waddle on to her own apartment, to guess and conjecture at the possible contents of Miss Leslie’s note. Her deliberations, however, were quickly exchanged for a desire to *peruse* the mysterious contents; and, in one of her unsuccessful attempts to make sense of such legible scraps as “take the liberty”—“beg leave to hope”—“Bertie-house, September the”—described by the undulating wave of a crow-quill—the inner adhering wax gave way, and the card burst open.

Like Colonel Brown’s man John, Mrs Fife felt that she had gone too far; and she was busy in planning numberless remedies and excuses, when she heard symptoms of Miss Leslie’s

approach; who had really begun to be greatly alarmed at Mrs Fife's prolonged absence, and the mysterious, though distantly heard conflict, which had succeeded to that lady's disappearance. She had promised Colonel Brown's servant, however, that he should have an answer; and it was proper, too, that Miss Leslie should see the fatal note which, in the mean time, she had taken care to read. Something therefore must be done, and she accordingly prepared herself for the task.

"My dear Miss Leslie," she began; "I have just had such a terrible accident! I suppose, like poor Mr M'Farlane, when he caught cold, I shall never get the better of it. Yes, my dear, you have cause to turn pale. Only think, to be mistaken for a common servant-maid! Mrs Horn Regular's adventure was nothing to this." "Mrs Regular, you know," she continued in the hope of still better preparing Miss Leslie for the forthcoming disclosure, "was in the habit of regularly taking her morning's walk; and Mr Charles Suttie, who never knew any body in their morning dress, happening likewise

to stroll into the garden to pass the time till breakfast, mistook her for one of the servant girls of the house. I can scarcely tell what passed; only, the lady herself confessed that, in spite of all her resistance and entreaties, the gentleman at last succeeded in giving her a kiss. Now, if it had not been for Mrs Gregory's protection, I know not what might have happened to myself! I was barely able to make my escape; and, in the struggle, my dear, see what happened to your note!"

Although Miss Leslie was very good-natured, she was not, however, what may be called a good-natured fool; and though she had good reason to suspect that some slight contre-temps had occurred in the present instance, she could perceive that her friend Mrs Fife's greatest misfortune consisted in having, through motives of original curiosity, broke open her note. But she loved both Mrs Fife and her foible too well to feel the slightest emotion of resentment on the occasion.

"My dear Mrs Fife," she replied, "the accident done to the card was not of the smallest

consequence; and now, since I have read through it, I shall leave the answer to yourself, should you not feel too much overcome by your late fright to attend to the contents."

"My dear, was you ever there before?" demanded Mrs Fife, who could not, or would not, perceive the slight smile that played about the young lady's mouth; "for, if I recollect right, the last time that I wished to take you to Colonel Brown's, we staid at home to entertain Mr Monotony, who, however, did not go one foot out of his road. Am I right?"

"Perfectly so, my dear Mrs Fife. And if you also recollect, we drove out in the evening to meet him; and if you remember, though we stopped the carriage, and called aloud, he did not seem even to recognize us."

"The funniest thing in the world, my love. Mr Monotony certainly astonishes me more than any body else. But, by the bye, I must away and answer these sad notes. Be so kind as order candles," she continued, as Miss Leslie went out; "and, do you hear me, my dear, you had better reply to your own yourself."

CHAPTER V.

—All things that are,
Are with more spirit chased than enjoyed.

—So we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of Court news ; and we'll talk with them, too,—
Who loses, and who wins ; who's in, who's out :—
And take upon us the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies. SHAKESPEARE.

“ You play whist, don't you, Mrs Fife ? ”
said Colonel Brown, while seated in the with-
drawing room at Bertie Castle, awaiting the ar-
rival of the rest of the company ; for it was one
of the Colonel's favourite plans of operations to
ply the enemy with every possible means of war-
fare, instead of quietly exposing himself to the
attack.

“Don’t *you*?” Mrs Fife was just going to reply; which in turn again was to be evaded, in order to make way for something else on the part of Colonel Brown, when the roll of a carriage caused her to profess herself pleased with the view from the windows, though these commanded only that part of the approach which made the circuit of a small grass plot before the portico of the house. The august presence of Lady Methodical, keeping by the arm of her husband, and the “pointed to a moment” arrival of Mr and Mrs Horn Regular, served for a while to set the contending parties at rest. The ceremony of the dinner, and the tittle-tattle of the tea-table, succeeded in course.

“I forgot, Mrs Fife, whether you said you liked whist?” cried Colonel Brown, so soon as his party came up, determined, it would seem, to pursue the same prompt measures he had adopted upon Mrs Fife’s first arrival.

“O, I am dying for a rubber, Colonel,” answered Mrs Fife; whose inexhaustible questions amongst the ladies, the gentlemen had now timeously arrived to interrupt.

"My dear," said Colonel Brown, turning to his daughter. Miss Brown ordered the card-table to be produced, and a party was formed with the greatest possible despatch.

In her first hand Mrs Fife held four Aces and four Honours. She tired, however, before she had had time to play them out—which she as speedily intimated by commencing a bye-play conversation with some gentlemen grouped together at the further end of the room.

"You do not care very much for cards after all, I suspect, Mrs Fife," observed Colonel Brown, who happened to be her partner, and who felt not a little provoked that their opponents, with nothing but a few small trumps in their hands, should have managed to carry off the odd trick.

Mrs Fife rose from the table.

"O pray, Mrs Fife, don't *rise*, perhaps the next round may turn out better."

"I am too anxious, Miss Brown, to hear you play," returned Mrs Fife, still making her way from the table, and not altogether displeased that Colonel Brown should suppose her offend-

ed, since it partly served to excuse what she had already resolved to execute—"To think of cards to-night: Do, pray, give us a little music."

Miss Brown took the proper time to comply; but at last began to stammer through the Huntsmen's chorus, followed by the Freischutz waltz.

"Ah! very pretty, my dear; very pretty!" exclaimed Mrs Fife, putting her hand on Miss Brown's arm in the middle of the waltz—"But it is a song we want—we want a song. Miss Leslie, my dear, won't you be delighted to hear Miss Brown sing?"

Miss Brown gave a quick look to Mademoiselle Antoinette, who, faithful to her agreement, immediately began a long reel-ral detail of school-room anecdotes, and tricks played upon Colonel Brown and Mr Squeake, having previously obliged Mr Campbell Hyndford to give up his seat, (which he had taken by Miss Leslie), begarnished with the story of Mr Charles Suttie's pretending to lose himself, and personifying his own valet for a week; and then a more gentle one of appeal to Lady Methodical, which

was answered by, "Perhaps you may have objections, my dear; but I suspect the evening to be the most proper time for singing, don't you think?"

A number of stray songs were accordingly tumbled about, in which transaction the gentlemen who were not card-players assisted. At length one or two hackneyed diddle-daddles were selected from a book which the footman was ordered to bring from the music-room; and these Miss Brown, wisely skipping over every ornament, and scarcely articulating either a high note or a low one, pretended to sing through, or, in fashionable phrase—execute.

"Mrs Fife seems tired, my love," said Colonel Brown from the card-table, as she was preparing to stifle another song. "I am rather afraid, Cecilia, the music has been too much for her."

"Are you really tired, Mrs Fife?" cried Mr Charles Suttie, who, without any taste, and indeed without knowing any thing about it, was, nevertheless, in the habit of admiring every young lady's singing, good or bad.

Mrs Fife yawned; and acknowledged, without

even the reservation of a compliment, symptoms of headache. For she had tried from her present position, but without any success, to break in upon a conversation, carried on in an under-voice betwixt Mr Campbell Hyndford and Sir James Methodical; who had *tact* enough, however, on their parts, to make one another understand, that though they were always the first to praise a young lady's musical performance, they considered that the present was a more than common wretched attempt. On turning away, however, from the piano-forte, she espied Mrs Horn Regular seated alone, Miss Brown having already drawn the most of the stragglers round herself and the instrument.

"O, pray, do tell me who these Hyndfords are?" exclaimed Mrs Fife, nimbly pouncing upon her prey. "Any relations to the late Carmichael, Earl of Hyndford, eh?"

"I believe not," said Mrs Horn Regular; talking with becoming *douceur*.

"You believe not! Where, then, in the world do they come from?"

Mrs Horn Regular explained.

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"What! cousins of Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, who passed a summer at —— Castle once?"

"Precisely so."

"And Mr Charles Suttie," she continued, as that gentleman unwittingly removed himself to another quarter of the room, but which careful undertaking only served to redouble the lady's esprit; "I have heard of the Sutties——O! dear me! Miss Brown; why won't you oblige the gentlemen with a single tune on the harp?—— But who is this man a little to the left of the piano-forte?"

This, Mrs Horn Regular could not tell.

"I shall soon, however, find him out."—— Mrs Horn Regular could easily believe that. ——"O, by the bye, Miss Leslie hasn't given us a song."

Here Mademoiselle Antoinette began to laugh immoderately; and Mrs Horn Regular, from whom Mrs Fife had just moved away, now went, with a face of vinegar, to join Lady Methodical. ——"My dear Miss Brown, is that a—but, of course, it must be—a double-actioned harp? She doesn't hear me, I suspect. Good gracious!

what a noise you and Mademoiselle Antoinette are making, Miss Leslie ! I declare it is worse than the clack of sixteen canary birds.—But I see Mr Douglas Hyndford disengaged—I must hear what *he* has got to say. Pray who's gained the odd trick ? Let me see, Colonel, what you have got in your hand this time ? I think I should like to try my luck once more."

Colonel Brown gave a shudder.

" Bless me ! Colonel, are you cold ?"

" You have taken my Queen, Sir," said Colonel Brown to Mr Horn Regular, who had been so kind as to supplant Mrs Fife.

" Your *Queen*, Colonel ? I don't think you had a Queen in your hand."

" Mrs Fife is perfectly correct, Sir," said one of the adversaries ; " it was my Queen."

" I knew it was, partner," returned Colonel Brown dryly.

" Knew it was ! Colonel ?" exclaimed Mrs Fife. " How, in the world, could you assert such a"—she stopt.

" I could assert *any thing*," cried the soldier, driven at last into a state of desperation, " if it

could only release me from the misfortune of a lady's conversation while at cards."

The party paused from their game; and even Colonel Brown himself felt, that the spirit of irritation had carried him at least beyond the bounds of propriety, if not of decency.

Mrs Fife, who would much rather get into a scrape, which, perhaps, she knew not how either herself or others were to get out of, then hesitate for one half moment in her career, was the first to break silence.

"Your father is losing all his money, Miss Brown," she exclaimed, addressing that young lady, who had again consented to *favour* the company with another tune—through the instigation, however, of Mademoiselle Antoinette, who was willing, at least upon this occasion, to sacrifice her own natural love of display, provided she could still keep Miss Leslie in the shade. "And I should suppose," she added, in a tone of conciliating good-nature, "if he is not so successful in the management of his hand sometimes, it is because he is occasionally troubled with cold feet." This last trouble was

understood to be Colonel Brown's hereditary complaint.

"With ill manners, she might have said," observed Colonel Brown, in a whisper to his party. "But get on, partner; and let us take the rubber this time. They are only a single, we are five love, and this is the third game."

Mrs Fife staid to see what sort of cards, not Colonel Brown, but Mr Campbell Hyndford, this time, should get into his hands, and, the deal having finished, Mrs Fife once more began.

"Let me see! let me see! let me see! Just so—and pray what are trumps, Mr Hyndford?"

Mr Hyndford bit his lips, and seemed even to suffer more than his crest-fallen adversary, Colonel Brown.

"What! clubs trumps?"—

"If *you please*, Mrs Fife," said Mr Hyndford; but observing Colonel Brown and the rest already prepared to enjoy themselves at his expense, he dismissed the bitter smile of scorn which now, we cannot say *played*, about his mouth.

"O, my dear Sir, I can give you no advice—

no advice," continued Mrs Fife, entirely mistaking his meaning; I merely tried the game to please old Mr M'Farlane. I suppose you were acquainted with him, Mr Hyndford?"

Mr Hyndford gave a groan.

" Ah, yes! he's dead, he's dead. You must be informed, I should think, of all the circumstances attending his last moments?"

" Five by honours, and two by cards—six and four are out," cried Campbell Hyndford, talking loud: " Mr Regular, do you go again on the odd trick?"

" We will *wait* a little, if you please," said Mr Horn Regular, rather discontentedly, and refunding some two or three crown-pieces of his winnings. " O, Mrs Fife's gone, is she?" he added, looking attentively round him; " O, come then, with all my heart."

" I shall be back presently, Mr Regular," cried Mrs Fife, who had seen him look about; " but I cannot, you know, be listening to *you* all night. Pray, Miss Brown, what was the name of that last waltz you played? It was very pretty. Has Squeake got it?—O, pray stay where you

are, Mr Hyndford, I have been seeking for your opinion all night."

Mr Douglas Hyndford bowed, smiled, and remained.

"Perhaps I should beg pardon, Sir : But, I *think*, if I am not *very* much mistaken, that I have had the honour of seeing some of your family in this country before—Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, a cousin of yours—if I mistake not."

The gentleman acquiesced.

"Pray, is she very well? She was rather delicate when I last saw her."

The gentleman was about to answer ; but Mrs Fife interrupted—"She was on a visit to —— Castle, near Dysart, was she not?—But pray —O my dear Miss Brown, too loud, too loud, —pray take a seat, Sir ; I must have a little more conversation with you. Is your cousin any taller since I had last the pleasure of seeing her?" she continued.

The gentleman wished to reply, but his wishes were a second time anticipated.—"I suppose

not : she does not grow any more, I should think ; although I don't pretend to know her age."

" My dear Miss Brown," she added, suddenly springing upon that very amiable young lady, as she was about to commence to murder another piano-forte piece, " Pray what was Miss Hyndford's age?"

" Miss Hyndford's age ?—!!!" cried Miss Brown, aghast.

" Hush ! my dear ; don't speak so loud :— But stop, what have you got in this music-book ? —Mrs Regular, oblige me by inquiring what Miss Leslie and Mademoiselle Antoinette are still talking about. I really think such a long conversation must apply to something ; and I should give the world to know what it is.—O, Colonel, have you broke up your rubber?"

" My dear Mrs Fife, the best of friends must part ;" and he rubbed his hands, whether with joy at being conqueror of a single rubber game played as a finale, or with satisfaction at Mrs. Fife's approaching departure, we will not pretend to determine, though it is likely that the latter event weighed heaviest in the balance.

“Is it so late?” demanded Mrs Fife; but at that instant a servant came to inform her that her carriage had drawn up; and that none of the rest could possibly get forward till she had driven off.

This rather peremptory order for dismissal having transpired, a general re-action accordingly took place in her favour. The discontents of the card-table had been set at rest. Lady Methodical and Mrs Horn Regular, afraid, perhaps, of having been wanting in these considerations and bienséances so necessary to the good health and welfare of polite life, gathered round with compliments and good wishes. These were succeeded by the respective husbands, and such of the gentlemen as had any natural predilection for a bustle. Even Colonel Brown himself held her hand a longer time than there was any occasion for; and Miss Brown condescended to wish her friend Miss Leslie “an agreeable drive, and a pleasant night.”

Mrs Fife attempted to dispense with all these unexpected honours, by taking each, as they approached her, to task. But in vain; she was

only answered by advices, re-echoed by the rest, against catching cold, getting damp feet, &c.; and with recommendations to take care to wrap himself well up. She tried, as a forlorn hope, to intrench herself in one of those recesses which had been prepared in Colonel Brown's vestibule for a more composed description of figures, but the crowd, apprehending her intention, pushed on; and, headed by their commanding officer Colonel Brown, at last fairly drove her from the field.

CHAPTER VI.

Odd numbers always beat the even.

"WE cannot have the Edmonstones, you know," said Mrs Lumsdaine, as she continued to set down, on a slip of narrow paper, the names of various personages to be invited to a grand ball and supper at Lumsdaine-house:—

"Get on, Jemima."

"Sir George Terrorfield"—

"Sir George Terrorfield? No, we mustn't meddle with him."

"He has been here," said Miss Jemima, who was at all times sufficiently ambitious.

"Yes; but—we must not think of him," returned her mother, who had the sagacity always to feel her way; and who seldom or never ran

the risk of being thrown back, by endeavouring to advance too fast forward.

“ Well, have you put down the Inglises?”

“ But what ails you at the Edmonstones?” here interposed Mr Lumsdaine, awaking as it were from a kind of reverie, as he sat by the fire communing with himself on the style of his next improvement at his seat of ———.

“ But tho’ he’s strong, yet Ferdinando
Can do no more than one man can do.”

The two ladies went on, without pretending to listen to this appeal to their attention.

Mr Lumsdaine guessed how it stood. “ Well, of course you must manage it as you please: You are the best judges, certainly;” and Mr Lumsdaine very quietly took up a taper, with which, having lighted, he ascended to his own private study. Mr Lumsdaine opened his particular bureau, where his eye happening to catch a glimpse of his own penmanship, he took up and read the following letter, addressed some twenty years ago to Stewart Edmonstone, Esq.

and which had been retained, as not being sufficiently warm, or decided enough, in its expressions.

“ MY DEAR EDMONSTONE,

“ Though you have never called upon me by a single word or action of your life, to acknowledge to you the infinity of my obligations, I nevertheless feel prompted to express to you, in a particular manner, that deeply-felt sense of gratitude which can never end but with my life.

“ Some persons, it is true, would, I believe, have required your acceptance of some particular gift or remuneration, in proof of their sincerity; but I know the delicacy of your character too well to hope to please you by such an unworthy experiment. I will rather leave it to *time* to prove the sincerity of my gratitude to your family, and my kindness, my *affection*, for yourself.

“ Believe me always, my dear Edmonstone, your most faithful and very much obliged Friend,

“ FRANCIS LUMSDAINE,”

But many many changes had intervened since the double of this letter had been penned. The writer had, by an equal mixture of good luck and dexterity, got the heels of his benefactor; and the families had long since degenerated from that spend-the-day sort of intimacy, into an occasional and far-between ceremonious dinner, or an evening party. Latterly, the Lumsdaines had set up their coach—Mr Lumsdaine having purchased one large estate, and inherited another; and the respective parties had now come to understand one another, in the cold compliment of a mutual invitation to dinner *once* during the season, proportionably seasoned by a respective morning call. And as a still further proof how well *time* had played his part, in displaying the everlasting gratitude of Mr Lumsdaine and his family, we have just set before our readers a portion of the programme of a grand entertainment, at which *all the friends* of the Lumsdaine family were understood to be invited;—an insult the more vexatious, since the Edmonstones were themselves the acquaintances,

and, in some cases, the relations of the friends and parties in request.

Mr Lumsdaine was in search of a memorial respecting a projected removal of the turnpike road, when this fine sample of his own stability fell in his way. A recollection of ancient amity reached his heart, and he instinctively prepared to return to the female committee, in order to insist that the Edmonstones should be placed at the *top* of the list. He staid, however, to find the memorial, and then descended to *argue* the point with his wife and daughter.

He found the ladies, who had now finished their list, deeply engaged in a profound calculation respecting the required number of seats, servants, and horse-shoes. N. B.—Horse-shoe tables.

“ I have just been thinking—hem !—that you really *might* club in at least young Mr and Miss Edmonstone,” he began.

The committee was silent.

“ I say, my dear, I really wish you would do something with these Edmonstones.”

"The whole of them are coming here some day next week," returned Mrs Lumsdaine softly.

"Well, but although—only consider, my dear, our ancient friendship."

But this was said less earnestly; and the respective members of the committee recommenced their debates, to give higher importance to which—for they knew something of their old obligation to the Edmonstones—they pretended, with true female dexterity, to contradict, and get a little out of temper, with each other.

"Would the Edmonstones have acted so to us?" was the first suggestion that arose in Mr Lumsdaine's mind; for he was hurt to think, that, as he so seldom interfered, he should, in this instance, have met with so little consideration or respect.

"If you cannot make up your minds to have the Edmonstones," he said at last, "you cannot have *me*." And he rose to retire for the night.

"Some particular, urgent, motive," thought Mrs Lumsdaine; and she condescended to re-

quest him to remain, and to express more distinctly his wishes.

“ I wish you to invite the Edmonstones to your ball, Mrs Lumsdaine.”

“ By all means, my love. I did not at first suppose you to be serious.”

“ And why not serious, Mrs Lumsdaine? Isn't this card and dancing party intended as a compliment to *all* your acquaintance?”

“ Well, well, we *can* have the Edmonstones. But I have just been thinking, my dear, that the far better plan would be, to have *two* parties. It is such an awkward thing, you know, to mix companies; and with such people as the Browns, our county people the Clerkingtons, or even the Andersons, we really must take care what we are about. Such persons are always more tenacious concerning whom they meet, than interested about what they get; and as we are ourselves not of any *very* long standing, it is sometimes necessary, you will acknowledge, that we should sacrifice our feelings to our situation, our affections to our circumstances. In fact,” added this dexterous politician, “ dress

parties are never given as instances of friendship, but as mere political expedients. It would be much better, therefore, in my humble opinion, to have a few friends entirely upon the Edmonstones' account.—What say you, Isabella?"

Miss Isabella rose to remove a waster from one of the candelabras on the mantle-piece.

Mr Lumsdaine, whose pride, notwithstanding this faint show of liberality, equalled, though it did not just surpass, his affection for his family, saw in his daughter's looks a *something* that even resembled personal aversion to the present objects of contention; and somewhat staggered by the plausible arguments which his better half had produced to stifle the rights of the Edmonstone family to high company, he was on the point of yielding to the expedient of a second ball, to be raised out of the scraps and ashes of the first, when their son, Mr Francis Lumsdaine, came in.

"Your father was actually talking of having the Edmonstones on the 24th, Francis," said his mother, who was not unwilling to follow up

her advantage on this accession to her strength. For Mr Francis Lumsdaine, with all the ambition of his mother, and all the selfishness of his sister, had something of additional slapdash in his disposition, which could seldom be brought to temporize or reflect, save where, like a great many others, his own particular honour or advancement was supposed to be concerned.

“The Edmonstones, mother? the Edmonstones?—*Lady* Edmonstone, is it?”

“O dear no; it’s these people that come to dine here every spring with the Misses Gilliwhray and their boarders, on one of the days when you and *Jemima* are invited out—Oh, the Edmonstones, you know, who live in that old place they call —— Street.”

“Well, and what was you saying about them?” attentively responded the young gentleman.

“Only, that your father wanted to have them at our party.”

“Did he want to have us affronted?” demanded Mr Francis Lumsdaine.

“Affronted, Francis! How could the Edmonstones affront you?” said Mr Lumsdaine; now, however, prepared to give in.

“To be sure, what could you make of such people, Sir? and you know that Jemima and I are no acquaintances of theirs.”

“It would not do, after all, to invite them to insult them;” for Mr Edmonstone himself was always a very kind and a very particular friend of mine——his father would have said; but Mr Francis Lumsdaine struck in with—“Pray, Sir, did you see Captain Colson’s card about going to Drumdriddle on Wednesday? I suppose you must let us have the coach; and, by all means, I should wish it to take us up at the Club.”

“You and Captain Colson are two gawkies, Francis,” returned Mr Lumsdaine; “but if he should ever happen to get to be M. P., I do not think that we need grudge him a ride in a coach. Only, I question whether Dorty will like his horses to go so far; for you know your mother will require the carriage in the morning.”

“ I shall make a note answer for me,” cried Mrs Lumsdaine, “ and so Dorty will not have to care about his horses. Two thin, scraggy brutes, at the best.”

“ As good as Clerkington’s, mother,” returned her son, who was content if he had himself and his groom well mounted. “ And in my opinion, mother, I think it much better just to *keep* by the Clerkingtons in such matters.”

“ If our own horses had kept alive, I should have copied them in no such things,” observed Mr Lumsdaine. “ But to be founder—foundering, was ridiculous nonsense. Our coach, too, is much better guided now, and the coach-maker’s account, since Dorty furnished us, has been always twenty pounds less, which will keep a pony for your younger sister, Francis !”

“ Captain Colson says, that Sir James Methodical positively told him, that my Tilly was the neatest thing he had yet seen,” answered Francis; whose thoughts were bent upon the set with which he had thought fit to side, ever since his admission into the — Club.

"Did he say so?" and Mrs Lumsdaine rubbed her eyes; for she was at all times sufficiently awake to whatever concerned the consequence of her family.

"Yes—and, by the bye, Captain Colson says I am to dine with him on Monday."

"Dine with Sir James Methodical!—Do, Jemima, go to bed; you look quite tired, child."

"Not at Sir James Methodical's, mother. You know his dinner days are held on Tuesdays."

"Ay, on Tuesdays? Dear me!"

"Yes, and Horn Regular has his on Wednesdays; which makes the Club sometimes inquire, When we saw Tuesday and Wednesday?"

"Funny," said Mrs Lumsdaine, after a long yawn; and she rose to retire for the night. Mr Lumsdaine closed his memorial, and Mr Francis went to spend the rest of the evening—no matter where.

CHAPTER VII.

The Scorpion, his abating and returning vigour, with his •
unimagined spirit of punishing pride.

Annotations on MARTIAL.

“ DID he want to have us affronted ?” said Mr Francis Lumsdaine. But there were others still to be affronted. Every body can swallow and digest those accidental, or perhaps sometimes intentional, neglects and delinquencies, which so frequently occur in the visiting events of life. But to be, as it were, *singled out* and *openly distinguished* as a mark for general contempt, who can admit or thole ? True, it was *only* the circle of immediate friends and acquaintance that were to be regaled by the forthcoming transaction at Lumsdaine-house. Still

these friends had friends; and the public, in general, are but too quick in drawing conclusions not over much to the credit of the parties suffering abasement. That the respectably descended family of the Edmonstones should not have been thought to have *caste* enough to fit them to appear at the Misses Lumsdaine's ball, was a theme for ever-constant lecture, conjecture, and discourse. It caused even indifferent people (from the former well-known intercourse of the parties) to hesitate and to reflect; and, in most men's estimation, either the fortune, connexions, or society of the party thus unceremoniously set aside, must necessarily have betrayed something very unsafe and very unsound. It was in fact a *cut*; and the wound was not to be supposed to *improve* the future strength and consideration of the victims.

The Edmonstones themselves, a family who could, in the far-famed Athens of pride, likewise boast of the comfort of having nothing to do with trade, and who had never once resented the line of hard distinction which Mr and Mrs Lumsdaine had chosen latterly to draw between

their respective children, were accordingly sensibly hurt by the implied affront. They were independent, too, of the world—loved society—and were willing, without any *particular* sacrifice, to have the countenance and occasional company of their betters. In this state of mind they felt, in its strength, the insult which they had never deserved.

Not to increase, but to sympathize in their chagrin, they were visited by a young man of high fashion, and of still more singular idiosyncrasy, a few days after the party just referred to. From this domestic type of Julius and Augustus Cæsar, the Edmonstones knew that nothing could be concealed or disguised; and, as their genius was not at any time very expert in the art of *colouring* mysteries, they were at all times sufficiently inclined to confess.

“Go, Marianne, my dear, and finish out that piece of drawing, till I speak with Mr Madrake. —She is taking it from a little story-book,” continued Mrs Edmonstone, “which she had many years ago from Isabella Lumsdaine.”

“ And the title, Ma’am, was The Danger of Ambition, or The Happiness of Content.”

“ It was The Faithful Friend,” said Mrs Edmonstone.

“ The giver, however, was a faithful devil.”

“ The family have disappointed us, Mr Madrake.”

“ They have. But give them line, and let them swing. There will come a time—circumstances will act some day—*contre* as well as *pour*. You understand, Mrs Edmonstone?”

“ It does not ~~mend~~ matters much in the mean time, however, Mr Madrake; and I acknowledge, that, for my children’s sake, I feel”—— hurt, she would have said.

“ Nay, Ma’am, how *can* you be ~~so~~ affected?”

“ I am not *angry*, Mr Madrake.”

“ Allow me then to say, that you are a beautiful, a wonderful exception to the generality of women.”

“ Not *beautiful*, certainly, Mr Madrake.”

“ Right again. You are *not* beautiful, *certainly*.”

“ That was a severe gulp, Mr Madrake; almost as severe as the Lumsdaines, some people might think.”

“ Right again; always consistent, always in proportion. You *are* beautiful, and that sweet smile is born of goodness.—Hush! no comments. I have myself a little personal bit of scandal to dissect, and you must listen to be enlightened. I was *not* at the Lumsdaines the other night. I half-sprained my ankle on my way; though I wanted to be there, to torment the youngest and finest gentleman of the house. This worthy, be it known, has thought proper, in these latter years, to overlook and forget the very persons to whom he was most obliged and indebted; a conduct the more inexcusable, when we look back on his former attempts to recommend himself to their notice. I met him in public yesterday; and I encountered one of those *cold looks*—one of those half-distant reluctant salutations—as if he wished to shew his new companions that he condescended. *Condescended!*—mark, Madam, the word condescended.—Now ask me a question.”

“ Well, what happened you ?”

“ I looked back—a thing I never did before ; —and I said to myself, ‘ Thou, Madrake, art nobody, and cannot hope to interrupt the advancement of others—Lay thee still, therefore, and look to fortune to comfort thy revenge ; or if not’—— But why do you look so strangely at me ?”

“ Mr Madrake ! Mr Madrake ! how *can* you go on at this rate ? Although I were doomed to be strangled by such people, I could not hope to be so comforted.”

“ Nevertheless, Madam, I shall still hope”—

“ Well, Mr Madrake, I cannot esteem you. As Mr somebody says, there is a dark closet in every house.”

“ Yes ; but, as you have heard, they must be made of firm glass who can venture to throw stones at other people’s windows.”

“ This from *you*, Mr Madrake ; the laughing, happy Frolic ?”

“ Nay, Madam, this trumpery wretch has just given ‘ the laughing, happy Frolic,’ one of those gentle signals, which nevertheless portend con-

tempt, neglect, ridicule, *ignorance*. Ignorance of *me*! But I shall yet be amused. Nor will I do the people either injury or injustice. The world will only be taught to appreciate the more that strength which enables them to despise all such difficulties, while I shall teach their pride that it is not *yet* quite invulnerable."

"Mr Madrake, I am greatly astonished. You never appeared to me to be the fiend"—

"Madam, I am capable of the most extraordinary energies—the most desperate attempts. I am *not* the good-natured amusing fool, that most men and women take me for. On the contrary, I possess a keenness of perception, a quickness of discernment, which nothing—no, not the simplest as well as the most perfectly disguised intentions can escape. I know, as it were by instinct, the designs of the whole human race; and if it is true that I can be amused with their follies, it is as true that I can sometimes annihilate and paralyze the effects of their power!—But, good morning; I have spoken too much, and have not, I believe, left myself breath enough to carry me through the porous sanc-

tuary of the *not* all-mighty Lumsdaines themselves."

"Mr Madrake, for mercy—for mercy's sake! do not trust yourself with them in this state of excitement."

"Madam, I am calm. And though I can resent, I do not choose to torment——Only a little, by way of medicine, you know," he added, taking Mrs Edmonstone respectfully by the hand. "Recommend me to your amiable husband, your daughter, and your son.—He must go abroad"——and Mr Madrake settled himself upon the off-hand seat of his last built Stanhope.——

Mrs Lumsdaine was busy superintending the removal of a large, and now cracked, alabaster figure, which she had already prophesied should give her many a sore heart; Mr Lumsdaine was in his study examining his accounts, making calculations of annual expenditure, &c. &c.; and the daughter had just returned to the drawing-room, having quitted it on the suspected *entrée* of a merely *decent* female relation, when Mr Theophilus Madrake was announced.

Mrs Lumsdaine, leaving her task to the care of her servants, took up the card of another *decent* acquaintance, which was lying upon the sofa table, and seated herself in an adjoining chair.

“It is Mr Madrake, Isabella,” she said, with a smile full of kindness and benignity; for that young lady, having first turned her back upon the door, had placed her foot upon the fender, in a position which signified that she was only to endure *groans* for the rest of the morning. The name of Madrake, however, caused her to look round; and she made a half curtsy of welcome in apology for her seeming inattention.

“I was struck by a tradesman’s coach,” said Madrake, in answer to both ladies’ felicitations. “The driver would insist on keeping the middle of the pavé, and Betsy would not succumb.”

“Dear me!—very strange!—what carelessness!”

“Oh, I only blame the owner himself: those tradespeople ought to make a better choice of

the persons they intrust with the lives of others as well as their own."

Mrs Lumsdaine hemm'd, and Miss Iasbella sought to alter the position of a small china jar, situate between a pair of smaller alabasters on the mantle-piece.

"Tradesmen, when they ride in coaches, ought to have some little consideration for the safety of those who are not quite so comfortably disposed of."

"*Still* tradesmen," whispered Mrs Lumsdaine, taking the china ornament from her daughter, and which could not, it seemed, be set to rights; and she looked with a half-fearful eye of inquiry, to ascertain whether there might not be something *under* the coach, which might go to affect her *own* safety as well as respectability in the matter.

"Enough," said Madrake, in an under voice; and he turned to make some trifling observation on the weather.

"How sorry we all were at not having the pleasure of seeing you the other evening," said Mrs Lumsdaine, speaking gravely. "Every

body," she added with an effort, "every body seemed very—happy."

"So I am told: But the fact was, I nearly sprained my ankle in missing the frail step of a hackney-coach, and have been very ill-natured ever since. I sent you no apology, because I did not think that I deserved the trouble of it. You were a great deal too kind, indeed, my dear Mrs Lumsdaine, to think of sending for me to your party."

"If you are *sincere*, Mr Madrake—Isabella, you had better go and look after these things *now*—I should take your thanks as a very great compliment: but I thought when you spoke of tradesmen, you intended only the most cutting reproach."

"Madam, I am the most careless inconsiderate creature upon earth: A person not to be minded—even when he speaks the truth. For instance," he continued, with increased rapidity, "I tormented Mrs Edmonstone to-day, nay, almost frightened her out of her life. She endeavoured, two or three times, to reason with me, and to bring me to a sense of justice;

but in vain: my imagination had taken possession of my judgment; and, in so doing, led me into an infinity of errors and mistakes.—Miss Lumsdaine, I am so happy to see you come back; or rather I am so sorry, seeing that I must of necessity betake myself away.”

“ O pray don’t go: Francis will be in directly; and, perhaps, you will do him the favour to stay and dine with him.”

“ That would be a pleasure of its sort. I saw a person very like him the other morning; and I think I bowed in mistake. I looked so foolish—but, like the maid and the Sèvres cup, what’s *done* cannot be *undone*.—I must be going.”

“ But won’t you stay dinner, Mr Madrake?”

“ Some other time: To-day I am engaged; so, pray, accept my regrets.—Adieu!”

“ We must avoid that man, Isabella. I feel as if I were going to faint.”

“ And yet every body talks of his good nature, and condescensions.”

“ His condescensions to us are not, however, to be talked about, my dear. Did you ever see any body like him before?”

“Hardly: But did you notice what he said about tradespeople, and afterwards about the Edmonstones?”

Mrs Lumsdaine put up her hand as a signal for silence. “Say no more, Isabella; say no more: I could observe nothing but his tiger eyes.”

The chief of the tiger eyes had, by this time, attained the door of a quiet *sanctorum*, in the recesses of which there still vegetated a human being, whose forte it was to abstract his mind, as well as his body, from the rest of his species and their concerns at large. Into this den of defunct hopes, however, the lord of the tiger eyes was by some strange influence admitted.

“Feverish, I see, Madrake,” spoke a voice from out the down cushions of an easy chair, placed by the side of a moderately cheerful fire. “Feverish—quite feverish. Till your spirit sleeps like mine, you are never to attain to a moment’s happiness, Madrake.”

“You are right, Mr Monotony; you are in the right.”

“I have so little pretensions, any way, my

dear Mr Madrake," returned the easy-chair, "that, upon my word, I think you mistake when you attribute to me any definite or positive opinions. But be seated."

"*You* are the opinion, Mr Monotony; and I only wish that I could catch the example now. You live quiet, retired, and happy; and what is particularly agreeable, you neither worry nor are worried."

"Madrake?"

"*I am* Madrake. It is a name which, like yours, should have been made to fit from the first. But, hear me, Mr Monotony: I am every day of my life in some horrid trouble or another, without my own consent. And I find, though I appear to regulate my moral economy with sufficient exactness and distinctness, that I am still as much as ever troubled, and as much as ever tormented. It is my system, for instance, to rebel against pain—to fly it, shun it, hate it;—but it neither shuns, flies, nor hates me. To be a congealed icicle like you, therefore, seems to me the grand resource; and yet—now, pray, take notice—I feel that, were I at this moment

to adopt, like you, the system of annihilation for my moral guide, the torments of the damned would never be sufficient to express my restlessness, impatience, and disgust ! To be in the grave alone, seems to me, therefore, the only means of acquiring rest. But, as you continue in *some* respects to survive, I should wish to know, whether you have to thank nature, or the assistance of some terrible career of trial, for your singular beatification and removal."

" I am not a saint, however," returned Mr Monotony ; " neither am I in any respect different from the rest of mankind. I feel some degree of surprise, therefore, that you should happen to suppose me so far translated as to be, in every way, exempt from trouble. There is always a place in the human heart which is to be occupied as a field of hope ; and another, which is always to be more than filled up with despair. A good man will repine, because he cannot persuade others to follow his example ; and a bad man——But, to proceed, I am tormented as much as yourself, and that every day in my life."

" And pourquoi, friend Monotony ?"

" You must listen, Madrake."

" I *do* listen."

" Well, then, I crunch my teeth with a piece of coal left in my bread; and bite my feeble tongue, through and through, in a fit of absence. I take a headache whenever I sit down to make myself comfortable, and am a couple of hours in shaking the cramp off my legs when I get up. I can never get people to believe me when I love them, and am tormented with civilities from those I despise. I have reason to apprehend, too, that I shall soon sink under the crush of my bodily infirmities; and every day, nay, almost every hour, shews me still readier for my grave, and the consequences of that last final extinction."

" And yet you can pretend to be at ease, and not destined to be disturbed, Mr Monotony ?"

" That is my real occupation."

" Then you are a deception, Mr Monotony."

" If I can deceive people into imagining a charm in content, and to experience comfort in indifference, I shall not shrink at the appel-

lation of impostor. In fact, who is it that does not impose upon himself and the rest of the world, in some shape or another?"

"Still and on, Mr Monotony, the effects of your little peevish perplexities are not to be compared to the ravages that are caused by more important, and more troublesome convulsions; and I see that, though you have dexterously enough endeavoured to console me by *your* representations—and which, perhaps, remind me of a puddle in a storm—yet can I perceive a vast distinction in the degree of *force* with which we, individually, encounter and resist the torments of our evil genius and our fate. Permit me, then, a detail of those eccentric events which, coming to a crisis, like a bad toothache, have ended in the final demolition and extinction of the tooth."

"My early youth and boyhood," replied Mr Monotony, "passed off in nearly the same manner, and nearly to the same advantage, as the rest of my cotemporaries; and I entered upon the possession of pretty considerable property, with a due proportion of those passions, vanities,

and affections, which are destined, for so many years, to reign the torment of the young, and the bane of the would-be happy.

“ In this condition, and being neither subjected to the tutelage of a mother, the whims of a pair of sisters, nor the caprices of an aunt, I soon attached myself to a set of fellows, who, though not exactly heroes of the stage, proved themselves, nevertheless, pretty formidable champions in the drama of life.

“ In this junto were to be found several excellent young persons, whom the respectability of my fortune, and the dignity of my connexions, drew around me; but these were imperceptibly supplanted by the lighter spirits, and lighter principles, of the multitude, who, in order to amuse me, laid active siege to my time, my attention, and my purse, and to whose convenience myself and my fortune became at last, in return, the sacrifice.

“ In addition to the various expenses of promiscuous eating, gaming, drinking, &c. &c. I lent away at different periods considerable sums, which, instead of being repaid, involved me in a

great many troublesome quarrels; till being unexpectedly compelled, owing to the failure of a person whose creditors had now taken possession of his debts, to sell off a considerable part of my property at a disadvantage, I thought it time to stop short. The mortification of this event, as might have been expected, caused me so much disgust, that, despising the idea of being revered as a nonsuch, I resolved at once to throw off the chief authors of my calamities—a resolution so far unfortunate, since it furnished them with an apology for employing every possible means in their power to keep and retain whatever advantages they had got.

“ I next determined to find out several acquaintances and friends, with whom I had always, in the meanwhile, kept up a sort of good-morning correspondence. But I had come too late to receive the first *bienséance* of their civilities. I found, that my reputation had suffered as well as my purse—for my defection, in overturning the credit of several of the parties, had occasioned not a few of those single-handed elopements, so fatal to the trading and indus-

trious interests of the community—and that I was now, in turn, looked upon as one of those hack-stagers or roués, to whom every thing is familiar, and, *par excellence*, every thing that is bad.

“ In this uncertain predicament I had the *mal fortune* to awaken the friendship of a young man, who, living well and always at home, shewed at last an example of prudence, joined to that of the greater comfort, independence; and though he was one of those sort of persons, whose constant civility of manners, and perfect resignation of look, had at first excited my contempt, so much was my mind fevered by former annoyances, that I took him at once, and entirely, into my confidence. This after-coalition, which upon the whole was a very happy one, lasted out three years; at the end of which period my co-adjutor unluckily fled beyond seas, having been detected in a system of forgery and imposition, in which I was now made to understand that I had borne, though very innocently, a principal part.

“ The loss, however, which I sustained in this final and irrevocable disaster, was not my only

misfortune in the transaction: I incurred general suspicions of fraud and connivance; and was even informed, from unquestionable authority, that it was in agitation to bring me before a committee of inquiry—a catastrophe that would most probably have led me to drown myself.

“The most awful agitations to which the human mind is subject were likely, it might be supposed, to follow such terrible events;—on the contrary, I fell into a quiet agreeable sort of stupor, which, as it lasted several years, enabled me to recruit in a great measure my very much dilapidated fortunes, and to regain in some degree my intellectual strength.

“I began now to awake from my lethargy; but, as I had acquired certain hum-drum habits of repose, and was inclined to keep a strict watch over my sensations, I permitted myself only that sort of life which the nearest resembles perpetual childhood. Nor am I upon the whole very much mistaken in my preference. I live, as you see, amidst the hurry and bustle of active life. I amuse myself with every work of reputation or interest. I daily perambulate the

town in my close carriage as a spectator of its happiest transactions, and set aside a fund for the benefit of its less prosperous inhabitants. I find, in short, that I have at length obtained the means of being satisfied without being sacrificed; and of tasting some of the gentler benefits of life, without being poisoned in the endeavour to obtain so small a portion of good."

"But were you never in love, Mr Monotony?" said Madrake, when he had finished.

"Yes!" answered Mr Monotony with a profound sigh, "I have been in love."

"Well, I should have thought so. But, though you have not married, I should have suspected the subject to have proved of too much importance to have been so easily dispensed with."

"Love, as you say, Mr Madrake, is not a subject to be so easily dispensed with; and it is only a fear of ripping up rather *too many* wounds, that has induced me to leave that passion at rest. However, if you are willing to hear the upshot of all my adventures in that way, you shall forthwith be enlightened."

Madrake prepared to be attentive, and Mr Monotony proceeded.

“On my coming of age, then, I had the honour, though no heiress, to be courted for my fortune; but, though I did not appear altogether insensible to the good taste of the lady, or the equally good opinion of her friends, I cautiously avoided making any of those blunders which are most likely to entangle men in the toils of marriage. The disappointed party, on the other hand, did not live long without their revenge. I paid my addresses to a young person, by whom, on my fortune not proving so great as was expected, I was peremptorily refused. My next and last love was sincere and ardent on both sides; but the young lady's parents happening particularly to detest me, the match was put off from time to time, till my beloved, having suddenly consented to adjourn to the other world, put a stop to all further deliberations in the matter. I was permitted to be present at her funeral, and there abjured for ever my hopes of happiness in that direction.—You are now satisfied, I suppose?”

“ Oh, perfectly, perfectly.”

“ And you will say, that I have had cause to be quiet ?”

“ Oh, certainly, certainly. But all this is but very little consolation for me, Mr Monotony.”

“ As for that, Madrake, I can give you nothing more than my company and my example : The first, what nobody else attains to ; and the last, what nobody cares for.”

“ I confess my gratitude, Sir ; and confess also that I cannot sufficiently appreciate an advantage of which you yourself, though the most needful, have been once upon a time deprived.”

“ I hear you, Madrake,” rejoined Mr Monotony, opening two doors, one at each end of the room—“ Now look here—in this quarter you behold my sleeping room and cabinet ; in that, our now much wanted dinner ; and beyond, a little snug apartment which I intend for your use. I have felt, myself, the misery and inconvenience of plunging into the cold of a dark night, after spending an evening amidst all the luxuries of comfort ; and, as I design you as a post of communication between me and the rest of my

species, methinks I may be allowed an interest in promoting your personal convenience.—Come, every thing seems prepared.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“ In this peaceable society, his days, months, and years glided on: nor was he less happy than the rest of his companions; for the Genius, instead of burthening his pupils with perishable riches and vain sciences, conferred upon them the gift of perpetual childhood.”

VATHEK.

“ WELL, I must confess I have passed a most agreeable day and night, Mr Monotony,” said Madrake, rising from breakfast; and there is even a greater pleasure in talking over those miseries to which we are necessarily subjected, than we should have supposed those miseries could have produced:—like barren heaths, and rugged mountains, once passed, they seem to acquire a softness and gentleness of colouring merely from the intervention of distance.

“ But, good morning; I am just going to see

two young heirs, who, having succeeded to fortunes acquired at a distance, are not to be supposed in any way trammelled or encumbered by what may be termed standard difficulties. I am going, then, to contemplate the opening blossoms of their foreign birth; and to witness some few of the very *brusque* details of their prosperity. I am just going to visit a pair, who, having got nothing to vex them, are yet industrious in making one another wretched—a pair who are eternally quarrelling, yet who cannot even for a moment separate; and who constitute in themselves a living instance, that there are infatuations in life which can, and, at the same time, can *not* be either overcome, corrected, or amended.”

“All true,” responded Mr Monotony, taking snuff. “But, pray, answer this note for me before you go; for I wish it out of my sight.”

Madrake took his place at a little desk situate in the embrazure of a window. “Well, Sir, what’s to be said?”

“Mr Monotony begs to inform Sir James

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and Lady Methodical, that he cannot possibly accept of the honour they intend him by their invitation."—

"—That he cannot have the pleasure, you mean, I suppose?"

"Write as I dictate, Mr Madrake—that he cannot possibly accept of their annual invitation for Thursday fortnight."

"I have no wish," continued Mr Monotony, "to lay myself by for a windfall to such commodities as the Methodicals, with their birthdays, Tuesday dinners, and what not. I will rather look into that newspaper, if you will hand it me, and see what sort of farces are to be found in some other quarter; for, at my time of life, it is scarcely to be expected that I should venture to play a part."

"You are not old, Mr Monotony?"

"You are right; I am too young to have encountered by one-fiftieth part so much as I have. But, go, go, go. I am terrified lest even you may bring trouble about my ears, Madrake."—O he's gone, is he?"

"I suppose both firebrands will be at home,"

said Madrake, approaching the door of a respectable-looking house, the inmates of which, however, had found it for their interest and advantage to admit two young gentlemen as boarders,—the precise Messrs Vonpepper and M'Ginger, the West India commodities now in request; and who, in suffering their bill of board and items to accumulate to above five hundred pounds a-year each, were suffered in return to ferment, squabble, and rampage to their very heart's content.

The lady patroness of this high-toned establishment was Mrs Dudd.

But, like a great many other governors and governesses, Mrs Dudd governed only in virtue of her name. Mr Dudd was the acting, as well as active, partner of this illustrious house. Her parlour companion, Mr Jonathan Hochytoch, was the son of Mr Dudd's first wife, by a former marriage.

Mr Dudd himself was one of those cat-witted indefatigable little nobodys, who are for ever turning every thing to advantage—for ever turning straws and sand-larks to account. Mr Dudd

kept three small shops in the grocery line ; dabbled in pictures, watches, and setting houses ; and was sometimes industrious in jobs in which the Principals did not find it so agreeable to make their appearance. Advancing age, however, and his second marriage with Miss Betty Affleck—the *lusus naturæ* of a defunct W. S. whom her brothers, not being over and above well provided for, had been anxious to get rid of,—had now induced him, with the help of some little gainings, to subset his three shops ; to wind-up all the little plots of his bye-play ; and to put his name and number on one of the best houses of a respectable street. Messrs Vonpepper and M'Ginger, recommended to him through the interest of his brothers-in-law, were the reward of this concentrated speculation ; and these gentlemen, his sufficiently experienced ingenuity now contrived at once to plunder and to please. As for that long necked *ignoramus* Mr Hochytoch, Mr Dudd was the better of him to fill up one of those large-sized sleeping-closets, which the better accommodation of the Messrs Vonpepper and M'Gin-

ger had left vacant in the upper quarters of his house—and still more the better of his likewise ample board ; for that gentleman's by no means despicable finances having been committed to the care of his mother, and after her, to the care of her husband, could very well afford to sustain all left-handed attacks—not to mention his natural predilection to be pleased with such like scraps as broke wine, sour pastry, cold bones, &c. and, upon all occasions, the least delicate parts of ready-made meat. The only obstacles, therefore, with which our friend Mr Dudd's political management had to contend, were the tumultuous and ever constant visits of a young female friend,—our own old acquaintance, to wit, Miss Catharine Kicklecackle.

Miss Kicklecackle, then, of whom, however, our former introduction in Fife did not render us sufficiently *au fait* to be able at that time very well to judge, or indeed to understand, was the only child of persons who were understood to be rich ; but to whom nobody had as yet been able to ascribe the means of wealth,

Some tipsy people had spoken of a tap-room, much frequented, down a stair at the head or foot of some close; others again, of a still more discreditable stamp, of a snug pawn-broking apartment, somewhere aloft in the High-street; and some even hinted, that there had *once* been such a thing as carrying a pack. There were even a list of intelligent persons who gave testimony to all three. Be all this as it might or may, both Mr and Mrs Kicklecackle, for *both* had been industrious, were destined to leave their daughter an inheritance, that was likely to outshine at least all that *they* had ever seen in the course of their own indefinable lives.

Mr and Mrs Kicklecackle, however, were any thing but demure personages. On the contrary, they practised to perfection the art of being easily content. For the sake of this system, then, were they keen to despise all those ordinary scenes of amusement and resort called public places which cost any thing, while they took undoubted advantage of all shows and processions which did not in their minds come under the lash of expense—being convinced of

the superior qualifications, perhaps, of such particular exhibitions as the tumblers, the Commissioner's walk, &c. all which are wisely considered to be—like the pictures of a certain artist now gathered to his fathers—*above* all price. However this may be, the Kicklecackles were at all times content; and perhaps did not enjoy themselves the less, that in their career of pleasure the trouble did not much exceed the cost.

Their daughter, as we have seen, inherited this double faculty for frolic, and was even so much over-balanced in her judgment by it, as to find, with all the exaggeration of a hypochondriac person, subjects of mirth and fun in the most ordinary events of dull every-day life. Mrs Dudd, therefore, was this young lady's great favourite; for, with Mrs Dudd, as with a *carte-blanche*, she could fill up all vacancies and deficiencies to her taste, as well as laugh and talk away with a freedom of manner that more than amply compensated for both.

There were, likewise, as we have said, two smart young gentlemen, inhabitants of Mrs

Dudd's Residenz, whose dandy habits and punctilious abord she loved at all times, and upon all occasions, to ridicule and condemn, though in her heart she had no disinclination to be admitted to a personal acquaintance with creatures moving in rather a higher circle in the sphere of life. Mr Hochytoch, too, it was of all others her greatest delight to caricature and insult; while he, in return, was only pleased to be astonished. But, determined on marrying somebody, and having an eye to the comforts, as well as to the sentiments of conjugal affection, so often misrepresented in matrimony, she had fixed him in her mind as a *corps de reserve*, after all her attempts to stupify and confound some more graceful-looking object had failed.

Mr Dudd, however, though he sometimes lamented her excessive intimacy with his wife, was yet too sagacious a politician to attempt to tamper with his fortune. Miss Kicklecackle served as a source of talk, as some parrots nibble at a stick, to the two firebrands in the drawing-room above, as well as to keep in mooring the sometimes unballast person of Mr

Hochtyoch. She was not in the least ill-natured either ; and was at all times much too ridiculous in her every-day conduct, to interfere with any of his arrangements, or even to encourage others in that attempt. Of this mixty *materiel* was composed accordingly the chief head-quarters of the valorous Vonpepper and M'Ginger of the day.

"The young gentlemen are both at home, I suppose?" continued Madrake, addressing a stout-looking page, not exactly from the Isle of Cyprus, but who belonged to one or other of the afore-mentioned combustibles, and whom, by the way, Mr Dudd had dexterously contrived to drill in to volunteer to open his street-door upon all occasions.

"Yes, Sir ;" and with a pair of well-fagged legs the page prepared, like the Goules of Carathis, to lead the way to the stormy court of the Pepper and Ginger above.

A contentious gale was already blowing upon their ascent, and it burst into a regular tempest as the door opening exposed both page and pilgrim to its fury. The page fled in terror, and Mad-

rake, daring to encounter the noise which his presence had so tremendously increased, advanced to reconnoitre and observe the heroes of the fray.

"Just come at the very moment you were most wanted, Madrake," said Mr Vonpepper, taking breath. "Now, smell this *extrait double d'Oeillet*: he says it's all cloves—all cloves; and what is the most ridiculous, he insists upon it, Sir,—*insists* upon it!"

"Oh, d——n it, man!" next exclaimed his hopeful brother; "don't—*don't* bother poor Madrake about it. What signifies, what signifies?—Now, Madrake, in a cool way—you understand—in a cool way, don't you think that stuff of *Chardin's* entirely composed of cloves?"

"Now, M'Ginger, I say it is *not* all composed of cloves," screeched Mr Vonpepper, as Madrake vainly attempted to settle the dispute.

"A composition of cloves;" asserted the Ginger.

"I say again, Sir, it is *not* a composition of cloves," cried the Pepper.

"You contradict me, then?" screamed the other spice, his eyes boiling fire.

"Yes, Sir, I do; and what is more, M'Ginger, I shall do so till I get you to resume the use of your seven senses."

"Now, Madrake," returned M'Ginger, in a voice softened like the suddenly becalmed noise of a tea-kettle arrived at boiling heat,—“did you ever—did you ever in your life hear such a speech as that? I tell you, man,”—again addressing himself to his red-hot competitor, “you are the greatest ass I ever beheld!”

“Mr M'Ginger, my dear Mr M'Ginger!” exclaimed Madrake, merely succeeding in smothering a laugh.

“Yes, Mr Madrake, the greatest ass I ever beheld! So help me”——

—“Then, Sir,” interrupted his not less fiery antagonist, “I shall just take the liberty, before Mr Madrake there, of once more *flatly* and *positively* contradicting you.”

“Then, Sir,” here as furiously retorted the other, “I shall do you the honour to make you eat up your own words again. You shall make,

Sir," raising his crimp voice to a perfect shout, "the most ample—the most *ample* APOLOGY!"

"Apology!!!" screamed Mr Vonpepper; "Ha! ha! ha! Pray, hear him, Mr Madrake. Apology!!!—Why, Sir," taking breath, "*you* shall make me one upon your *knees*, before I have done with you yet."

"Oh, very well."

"Oh, very well," echoed both, in that soft civility of language, which, like the unobtruding worry of two terriers fairly yoked, gives us at length to understand, that the *tongues* of the parties have now no longer any thing to do with the feud.

This sudden subsiduation—Gentle Reader, a *word* to the wise—This sudden subsiduation, then, of the bickering storm, for the intervals of pause had been but rare, gave room, however, for a bye-breeze to déploy behind the door; and which having continued, as it seems, for some time to play in stifled zephyrs, now exploded at this particular juncture in a burst of laughter—too desperate, it would appear, to be any longer resisted or controlled.

"That is the girl Kicklecackle, Tom," said M'Ginger, nodding mysteriously, as the sound, whirled along in tempest-eddies, still continued to rush.

"O yes, I knew it was her. What do you think of a laughing machine, Madrake?" (This from Mr Vonpepper.)

"Why, such a thing's quite possible, Tom. Witness the praying Jennies of the Calmucks. What say you, Madrake?"

"I deny it, however," politely resumed Vanpepper.

"Well, well, man; I tell you it's of no use whether you deny it or not. I affirm it to be quite possible."

"And I, Sir, say again, it is *not* possible."

"You hear him, Madrake?" now gasped M'Ginger. "Squibs and lightning! what would you advise?"

"At him again, Ginger," replied Madrake, delighted with the opportunity of once more exciting the risible sympathies of Miss Kicklecackle, whose very name announced her to be

the same extraordinary individual who had once so thoroughly astonished his old acquaintance Mrs Fife.

"Madrake can't defend you, Ginger," resumed the adversary in a bantering tone: "No use taking the thing up." Here a few ha! ha's! in honour of Mr Madrake's calculation we presume, were heard distinctly to rustle within the locale of the adjoining passage.

"Madrake can at least answer for himself," briskly returned the Ginger: "what do you say, Madrake?"

"At him again, Ginger!" cried Madrake; more than ever intent upon the invisible Miss Kicklecackle's amusement; and assuredly the ha! ha! ha's! were now redoubled; and in such a manner as restored to both spices their full compliment of natural ire, as well as of artificial heat.

"You say it's impossible," observed M'Ginger, interrupting Madrake's thrice repeated "at him again," and speaking in a voice of repressed passion. "You say it's impossible? O yes, I know—I know. O yes, certainly you're in the

right; it's quite impossible:—But, *I'll tell you what*,"—now sounding full the trumpet of defiance—"I say, it is possible."

"And I say," vociferated his equally incensed opponent, "that it is *not* possible."

Messrs M'Ginger and Vanpepper now recommenced, with redoubled virulence, their former altercation; in the midst of which the invisible Miss Kicklecackle went off in what we would suppose a convulsion fit; for the splay foot of Mr Hochytoch, with whom, by the bye, she had been all the while engaged in a war of signals, was now heard to stumble about in search of a body, which he contrived to convey away with all the care and anxiety generally bestowed upon the victim of a swoon or a fainting fit.

The quick ear of Madrake alone, however, had intelligence of this catastrophe. Messrs Vonpepper and M'Ginger were taking, with the rapidity of lightning, their last solemn leave of each other for life.

"And it shall be this moment, too, Sir;" were the farewell words of the much irritated

and irritable Vonpepper, as with an agitated and half-frantic gesture he ran about seeking his hat and gloves.—“ Good morning, Madrake, good morning. I am sorry I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you again, at least in *this* house. And as for that every thing but gentleman, there,” he added with a look of passionate scorn and defiance, “ I shall teach him that I *shall* and *will* go. Aye, go this very instant,” he added, barely escaping being snapped in two by the door which his own violence had nearly driven from its hinges.

“ Then go, and be d—n’d !” roared M’Ginger, once more hurling vengeance upon his self-discarded antagonist.—But, mercy on us ! what noise was that ?”

“ Only Vonpepper trampling down Miss Kicklecackle and some other body in her company,” replied Madrake, still more amused.—“ But go, in the name of humanity, and inquire what is the matter.”

“ Well, I dare say I shall go and see,” returned M’Ginger ; who had much more phlegm in his disposition than his neighbour

Vonpepper ;—and bustling towards the landing-place, “ Merciful heavens ! Madrake, how could you guess so well ? Miss Kicklecackle, and her *ami* Mr Hochytoch, are lying killed at the bottom of the stairs.—Vonpepper has done it,” he added coolly, returning to the apartment.

“ Let’s fly to their assistance, then,” cried Madrake, getting up.

“ O, it’s of no use : They’re both dead,—dead as Julius Cæsar.”

“ A sight of Miss Kicklecackle, however, I *must* have,” exclaimed Madrake, springing forward ; and both gentlemen taking ten steps at a time, now reached the prostrate lovers, already dissolved in groans from the effects of their unwary leap.

Of course, Miss Kicklecackle was the first object of attention.

“ My dear Miss Kicklecackle, I *hope*, I *trust*, you are not hurt,” said Madrake : “ Pray support her on your side.—Ah ! indeed,” he added, in a kind of low murmuring whisper,

"you may well cry—poor Miss Kicklecack!"

Miss Kicklecack answered with a groan.

"Now pray, for mercy's sake, my dear Miss Kicklecackle, do tell me how you are?"

"I am murdered, *that's* all!" vociferated Miss Kicklecackle. Oh! Oh! Oh!—*He!!!*"

"My *dear, dear* Miss Kicklecackle!" cried M'Ginger, now seriously alarmed; "I am sorry! Shall I go fetch Mrs Dudd?"

"Oh, no! no Dudds!" And the young lady, now placed on her feet, leaned her pensive drooping head against the unconscious rails of the balustrade. "But why did you not get me faster out of the way, you abominable idiot you?" she continued, addressing Madrake, who was on her other side, and whom she now wisely mistook for Mr Hochytoch, (that gentleman having been quietly, by the help of M'Ginger, shoved aside).

"I thought it was the devil, Miss, and was afraid," answered Madrake, imitating the voice of a person in pain.

"Just like you," retorted the damsel. "But oh! Mr M'Ginger, had you only seen him thundering down upon us like a runaway cart-horse! No wonder I made this wretch here set me down to look at him, thinking all the while that he would provide for my safety; instead of which, after being fluffed aloft in the air, we were both twirled to the ground."

"Oh! oh! oh!—oh! oh!!!" groaned Madrake.

"Yes, you may well groan; for I suppose all the teeth are knocked out of your head. But was it your head or mine that came with such a rap to the ground, let me ask?"

"Mine," whined Madrake, pressing his hands still closer on the lady's forehead, so as to keep her fast in the same position.

"Yours!" screamed Miss Kicklecackle in an ecstasy of delight. "Yours! ha! ha! ha! I never heard three such raps in my life. They were just like minute-guns!—But, O, gracious goodness! is that you opening Mrs Dudd's parlour door?" she added, as Mr Hochytoch now thought proper to disappear at the farther end of the passage.

“ Yes, it’s me !” returned Madrake, in a hollow whisper : “ Don’t you know the Witch of Pentecost ?”

This part of Madrake’s performance was too much. Miss Kicklecackle wheeled about with a desperate effort ; saw who it was to whom she had been speaking all the time ; and went off in a mixed fit of screams and hysterics.

This desperate display, like the warlock’s song in the Witch of Fife, “ made the weasels loup out of their mouldy holes.” Mrs Dudd began to daddle towards the scene of action ; Mr Hochytoch put out his gaunt head at the parlour door—the same which he had been just seen to overtake ; and first and quickest, Mr Dudd himself—and who had just been superintending, amongst other things, the repair of an old and somewhat rusty roasting-jack—came forth.

“ Why, dear me ! good people !” exclaimed this second child of industry and something else, “ I thought you were all gone mad.—My dear Sir,” he continued, observing Madrake, upon whose toes he had unwittingly trampled, and

disguising his ill-nature and impatience under an additional reinforcement of smiles and simpers; "I beg—I beg ten thousand pardons! but, really, I felt some small desire to know who it was that could have set you all agog: I don't know what Mrs Dudd, there, will get to say to her neighbours. Why, good gracious bless us! (advancing still nearer the centre of mystery)—why, my dear Miss Kicklecackle, is it you all the time?"

"No, it's Marget Fife," cried Miss Kicklecackle, suddenly recovering herself.

"Marget Fife! Miss Kicklecackle? And pray, who is Marget Fife?"

"I don't know; I never heard of her before in my life," answered Miss Kicklecackle, preparing to go off into another set of fits.

"She's safe now, Madrake," whispered M'Ginger; "so let's be off, in case we, too, should have a 'set-to' with the old gentleman." And the parties retired amidst a flourish of scolds from the much-disturbed Mrs Dudd, answered by Miss Kicklecackle with her whole *posse comitatus* of shrieks, screams, and laughs.

“ And now, Madrake, what would you have me do with poor Vonpepper ?”

“ Why, I think you have done all that was necessary, Mr M‘Ginger.”

“ Ah, yes ! But consider, my dear fellow, it must be very inconvenient for him to be changing his lodgings this week. For one thing, he has not one single clean cravat in his whole wardrobe.”

“ Why, then, since his *neck* is in danger, the best plan will be for you to go out, and him to get in.”

“ Why, my dear fellow, that plan will only make things worse and worse.”

“ Why, then, you must just make up your minds to agree again.”

“ Agree!!!” screamed the Ginger, “ I wouldn’t pass another night under the same roof with him, either to save your life or his. But, pray, put up your watch ; don’t go yet.”

The other party put up his watch.

“ By the bye, Madrake, I wonder to which part of the town poor Von will have gone to.”

“ To you, you know, that can be of no earthly consequence, M‘Ginger.”

"O, but, my dear fellow, consider, consider. We have got these ribbed stockings to consult about; and a new pattern for frills—these last to be returned this very night by six o'clock to cut out; and Neate the tailor has actually promised to be here between this and five. Oh, really I must go myself, and inquire this very moment where he is to be found."

"You needn't give yourself the trouble, my dear M'Ginger; for methinks I hear his boots now creaking upon the stairs."

"Well, I am so happy! really, Madrake, it would never have done his leaving me with such a load of business on my hands.—I say, Vonpepper, I am really glad you are come to decide about these stockings that you last ordered."

"Poor Carlo! poor fellow!" exclaimed Vonpepper in reply, addressing a little fatted Blenheim cocker, which ran tumbling about his heels. "Poor fellow! poor Carlo! chee-up! Well, M'Ginger, what do you think I gave for this little bit thingy now?"

"You'll have lunch, Madrake?" replied M'Ginger, still pretending to be in a pet.

"I am always agreeable."

"Pray what shall we have, Von?" continued M'Ginger, coming rather abruptly out of his sulks. "Pretty creature that, upon my word."

"O, any thing you choose.—Carlo, come here, Sir! Now be still, this moment, Sir! Isn't he a pretty creature, now, Madrake?"

"O, divine! just like the rest of the breed."

"O, I knew you would like him. But how do you think I got him, eh?"

The parties not in the secret inquiringly stretched their eye-brows. "Why, by the merest chance imaginable. Met him, Sir; met him on the public street. Got the fellow to take the thirty shillings, and carried him off in triumph. Thirty shillings, thirty shillings, Sir, was all the damage."

"Thirty shillings!" said M'Ginger. "I think the creature's not worth thirty farthings."

"You must allow yourself to be no judge, then," returned Mr Vonpepper.

"No judge! why, Sir, it is *you* who are no judge."

"Then, Sir, we judge differently. But don't

you see the long hair upon his feet; and that ring round the tip of the top of his left ear. I don't suppose you could find me such another, under three times the money. And, Sir, what is more, I defy you to"——

—"Defy me? As a gentleman, Mr Madrake, I think I ought to hear no more after that."

"Oh, at him again Ginger."

"Sir, Ginger is not my name."

"Ah, for mercy's sake, don't fly upon me. I rather suppose I have got enough to do to keep as I am."

"But, Sir, I say again, Ginger is not my name. And you have already taken liberties in that way which no other gentleman would, or ought, to have put up with."

"O, it's certainly very rude," again struck up the Pepper, who was always ready, like his brother, to make common cause against the common enemy.

"Well, gentlemen Spice, I sit corrected."

"Ha! ha! ha! Well done, Madrake! But notice Carlo there; only observe how he is looking at Madrake. Now confess, Vonpep-

per, that you never in your life saw such a bargain."

"I never heard of such a bad one."

"A bad one! Why, Sir, as I was just saying, I defy you to produce me his match in this country."

"Well, then, Sir, if you will receive the truth in a joke, I will say, that every other beast is but too good for him."

"You know nothing about it, Sir. And I will thank you, as a favour, to put some restraint upon your impertinence."

"Impertinence, Sir? I shall thank you, as long as we have Mr Madrake with us, to retract your words."

"What, Sir! do you pretend to bully me?"

"Instantly, Sir, retract those words."

"Sir, I shall kick you down stairs."

"You!!! Sir?"

"Yes, Sir."

"You!!! Sir?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Stay," said Vonpepper, suddenly calming, and producing a similar instantaneous effect upon

his colleague in clamour, Mr M'Ginger, "I'm much afraid we shall be too late for our ride to-day. Pray, Madrake, what is it by you?"

"Why, I declare—and I declare I feel very much astonished—it is actually half-past three o'clock. But, pray, where is our expected lunch, good people?"

This last remark, as it struck more to the heart than to the passions of this pair of combustible fire-ships, caused both parties to fly to the bell at once, and to bustle through the hospitalities of a lunch-tray with all the cordiality and good-humour of long sworn friends.

At the third glass of wine, however, the squibs again blew up, and in such a manner as to throw the once more astonished Madrake out of the house. The force of the explosion was even so powerful as to carry him, as the crow flies, back to the still-life moorings of Mr Monotony.

"Ah, Mr Monotony! Mr Monotony! how wisely have I been punished for the crime of despising content—despising vegetation in the shape of a waking sleep."

Mr Monotony in reply looked up, or rather

looked on ; for however tempestuous had been Madrake's sea of troubles, it was at present ebb-tide with him.

“ What ! not even give me welcome ? ”

Mr Monotony scarcely pointed to a seat.

“ Well, what a world is this ! to be baited to death by two fools, I presume under age ; and to find in a wise man, instead of help and consolation, only a living automaton.”

“ I never made any thing by speaking,” grumphed Mr Monotony ; and he placed himself in that position which is not again to be disturbed.

“ Fire after ice, and ice after fire. Certainly, as Bentivoglio says, ‘ Here, visits are continual, attendances frequent ; eating and sleeping got by stealth ; wines luscious ; the air intemperate ; conversations endless ; and slaveries without any seasoning of liberty.’ And yet in this particular quarter there is a dead pause ; even worse than all these evils put together.—Mr Monotony, pray are you asleep ? ”

Mr Monotony opened his eyes a little wider, and then let them fall again with a dead glare,

which sufficed to intimate that the owner wished for nothing better than extinction.

“ Well, Mr Monotony, my nerves, like the springs of a fine carriage on a rough road, are not yet seasoned, I suspect, for such harsh changes. Pray give me something to fright away my distractions with.”

“ The best way to escape trouble,” answered Mr Monotony, “ as your man Bentivoglio says of envy, is to despise it. Never did any arrow hit the heavens; and you may multiply this point *ad infinitum*. But, as our friend Guevara says, setting aside all further railing, I earnestly entreat you to grieve no more on such an account, but at length begin to be wise; for, otherwise, I shall think you rather fit to be reclaimed by hellebore than by a jest.”

“ Enough, my dear Mr Monotony.” And dropping himself, in imitation of his eccentric partner, into the opposite seat, Madrake sunk, like another Somno, into a sort of dwam or reverie, which lasted out the rest of the night.

CHAPTER IX.

“ The desire of knowledge, though often animated by intrinsic and adventitious motives, seems on many occasions to operate without subordination to any other principle.....We are equally allured by novelty of every kind—by a desert or a palace, a cataract or a cavern, by every thing rude and every thing polished, every thing great and every thing little.”

RAMBLER.

NOTWITHSTANDING, however, the slight given by the Lumsdaines to their old acquaintances the Edmonstones in the affair of the ball, it was not Mrs Lumsdaine's design to separate herself entirely, as might have been supposed, from their society. Her husband could not forget, though he might neglect, the friends of former years; she, herself, had once belonged to a family remarkable for their hospitality, goodness, and simplicity; and, in particular, for the undeviating constancy they had always manifested and displayed towards their very oldest friends.

Something of this kindly feeling remained, therefore, to influence her conduct upon this occasion ; and, though more than ever devotedly ambitious of the future consequence of her son and daughter, she felt still inclined to retain about her husband and herself some portion of those old associates, with whom she had once been so intimately and agreeably connected. Impelled by these motives, Mrs Lumsdaine, about a fortnight after her grand party, set out (on foot however) for the residence of the Edmonstones.

Mrs Edmonstone had been informed by some agreeable gossip or other, that Mrs Lumsdaine *now* went nowhere but in her coach ; and it was therefore with some surprise she beheld the latter lady make her appearance, minus her usual props of parade. She had just been engaged, too, in an argument with her son, in which she had nearly succeeded in convincing him of the folly of resenting the conduct of the Lumsdaines, when Mrs Lumsdaine herself arrived to finish the debate.

Mrs Lumsdaine was come with cards of invitation to dinner in her hand, for that day

three weeks, for each member of the Edmonstone family, respectively and individually. She was come, too, prepared to change the day, should the parties be engaged; and to declare, with truth, that they were the persons she was the most anxious first to secure.

Mrs Edmonstone had nothing to object to so many obliging propositions, and her son was content to find the breach occasioned by the ball so very honourably cemented. Mrs Lumsdaine, after having thus executed her mission, took leave, not a little self-satisfied, we do believe, with the duty she had just fulfilled.

Three weeks ! What an age ! Three weeks ! and the fourth one is on the verge of commencement. Three weeks passed in travelling from the one end of the kingdom to the other, is three weeks. Three weeks between the acceptance and the fulfilment of a visit, takes but the semblance of so many days.

Be this as it may, Mrs Lumsdaine's three weeks were at an end; and the Edmonstones, between six o'clock and half past, were ascending, preceded by a smart footman dressed in

flesh-coloured cotton gloves, the elegant staircase of Mrs Lumsdaine's mansion in No. — Royal ——.

This entertainment has been already described in a very clever set of Sayings and Doings, which made their appearance here as well as elsewhere some two or three seasons ago; our readers therefore will excuse us the necessity of being particularly *prolix* on a subject already so ably discussed.—To proceed.

Mr and Mrs Lumsdaine behaved with the greatest frankness and cordiality, and as they really wished, not only to appear, but to *be* hospitable, they exerted themselves in every way to do the agreeable. Mrs Edmonstone was taken down by the gentleman of the house; Mrs Lumsdaine half offered her arm to her husband; Miss Jemima looked rather shy upon young Edmonstone, but took his arm—taking care at the same time, however, to separate herself from him, under some pretence or other, ere they passed *en file* before the assembled attendants. The dinner itself was grand, was served in silver, and four men waited. Mrs Edmonstone was first invited

to drink wine, and the seats of honour were filled respectively by that lady's husband and herself. In the evening, the two large drawing-rooms were splendidly lighted up; fine teas and coffee were paraded about; music in due time was set agoing, and cards and card-tables were set agog. Every thing was done, and—every thing was done in vain. The company—that green-eye'd monster worse than jealousy, and in fact, in some cases, its very parent—consisted of, as usual, the Miss Gillivrays and their boarders, a young gentleman sometime tutor in the family, and some of Mrs Lumadaine's own left-handed relations. Nay, further, the son and heir was absent with a party next door, at which he was to have the satisfaction of meeting Tuesday and Wednesday; and Miss Jemima's headache sent her, the moment the ladies retired, into her own private apartment.

The Edmonstones both *saw* and *felt*, that the whole affair was only an *exertion* in their favour, that they were *out* of the circle of Mr and Mrs Lumadaine's regular acquaintances, and that they were merely 'kept on' as a sort of fag-end,

which only custom and long habit now rendered necessary, or rather advisable, to retain. To sum up matters, *another* dinner had just been given three days before to the Miss Clerkingtons, and others, picked up at the house of Mr and Mrs Edmonstone, but now added to the *corps distingué*—from which, having never been admitted, the Edmonstones could not very well be said to be dismissed.

In answer to this display of contempt, the Lumsdaines were invited back to meet a party of some consideration in rank as well as fortune; and amongst other stars of genius, Madrake. To this arrangement, however, Francis Lumsdaine, younger, Esquire, pleaded the necessity of “perhaps being out of town at, or near about the time mentioned in Mr and Mrs Edmonstone’s polite invitation;” and Miss Jemima pleaded rather less politely, a “prior engagement.” She could not make up her mind even to meet the young Duke of B—— at the house of a family she had previously determined to get rid of; while, besides her fear of being met with in the wrong quarter, she had an

increased antipathy, now that she was accustomed to move about in a close carriage, to every body who was acquainted with her history and origin, or was in habits of intimacy—and such unluckily was the case with the Edmonstones—with the lower *grade* of her father and mother's relations. Not, however, because she wished to *cut* her connexions—which, by the bye, neither her reason nor her affections would *as yet* permit—for her aunts were what is sometimes called monied ladies—but because the fewer witnesses the better, since any such witnesses were now incompatible with the predilection she began to feel, in imitation of Miss Brown, for rendering herself “Aloof-like” inaccessible, and Aloof-like great.—To return to facts. Mr and Mrs Lumsdaine, as it was still day-light, came to Mr and Mrs Edmonstone's dinner in a hackney-coach. Mrs Lumsdaine said something to Madrake about horses being tired; though it was well known that they had only gone to and from the National Gallery of Arts, and that Miss Jemima was dining at home with her brother. The reason, though not the

obvious reason, was, Miss Jemima and those of her sisters who had the nearest prospect of "coming out," were preparing that same evening to entertain a select juvenile party, to accommodate some of whom they had thought fit to employ the very horses which their Mamma had just declared to be knocked up.

Be their conduct what it might, it did not signify much, at any time, to Madrake. He was planning the introduction of the Edmonstones to the members of one of the most efficient lieutenancies of the kingdom—the lieutenancy of Fife. The son's admission he would secure by means of his own personal influence; the admission of the rest of the family, and their subsequent establishment, he meant to effect through Mrs Fife. It was, nevertheless, neither through means of their own relations, or by their former connexion with certain nouveaux riches, such as the Lumsdaines, that he had planned the future advancement of his favourites, the Edmonstones. He had a scheme in his head, the particular combinations of

which were only to be developed through time; and unless it was the defection of the younger shoots of the Lumsdaine family, he had at no time any great reason to be dissatisfied with the *bearing* in society of the Edmonstones. Not over averse to his own interests in the mean time, he adjourned, on the day following Mrs Edmonstone's dinner, to Mrs Fife's more compact town Residenz, in order to prosper his suit with her amiable friend and companion, Miss Leslie.

He found that excellent young lady alone; and, which by some people may be thought better, in uncommonly good spirits. She had just been visited by a young gentleman, a relation of her own, who had expressed himself in rather more favourable terms than he had wont to do before. She had long owned, it is true, a sort of penchant for Madrake, but a genius like his was not very much to be depended on. Mrs Fife, she more than suspected, would likely prefer in her last testament some not very well understood relations or descendants of the late owner of the M'Farlane Repository, in company

with the spice-sending member of assembly in Jamaica; and that her own income might consequently prove rather uncomfortable,—especially should death, or chance, deprive her of her grand-aunt or of Fife-hall. To marry, therefore, and to marry well, though not by any means from a selfish or avaricious motive, was a step which, should a just occasion offer, she might not be altogether disinclined to adopt. She was not, however, in any hurry; though the possibility of such an event had given her for the moment that air of cheerfulness in which Madrake was now destined to discover her.

A happy smiling face, or, as some quizzical person would say, *phiz*, generally beguiles us of our thoughts, and awakens a feeling that, for the while, something resembles corresponding happiness. There are others, however, whose over exuberance of spirits occasion quite a contrary effect. Miss Leslie's satisfaction was not to Madrake's taste. But he wished to make it appear, at the same time; as if his discontent

merely proceeded from a temporary feeling of disgust towards the world at large.

“ You are very grave to-day, Mr Madrake : A misfortune of its kind, since you so often set us the example of being happy, whether we have reason to be so or not.”

“ Because,” returned Madrake, “ I have found reason to change all my ideas.—In fact there is no possible situation which does not produce; not its proportion, but its preponderance of human misery.

“ Take business, study, pleasure, intrigue,” continued Madrake; “ is not the sad load of anxiety sufficient to bear down even the expectation (so seldom realized) of success? And what is philosophy itself, when, like the philosopher, we must confess, that all that we know is, that we know nothing? Let us even take enjoyment—take it in all its kinds, even down to the softer moments of unobtrusive domestic life, and say, whether in any particular it can be trusted as a means of happiness?

“ From thence adjourn to that assembly of the well-bred commonly called a ball, and say,

whether or not you ever obtain the society of the persons you most want ; or that you have not always to lament the absence of some one individual in particular whom you love ? and whether, as if it were to *further* mischief, you are not brought in constant ceaseless contact with the very people you most nauseate and detest ? Say, too, whether you do not experience a fictitious appetite, which still further surfeits and disgusts ; and which, while it wearies you in search of pleasure, yields your fatigued senses only pain ? With respect to larger fêtes, such as routs, theatres, festivals, &c. the human mind can only sacrifice the benefits of ease and quiet, but can never hope to set up any real feeling of enjoyment in their place. There are, however, *other* kinds of entertainment. The most rational are those in which men, and sometimes women, meet in order the more publicly to irritate and contradict one another ; and there are bacchanalian revels, which, commencing with decorum, end in the devil !”

“ All this is terrible, terrible, Mr Madrake !

but there are still beings who contain in themselves the sources of admiration ; men who"—

“ You do right to pause, my dear Miss Leslie. All these things do not equal in misfortune the history of an accomplished man—a man, whose whole life consists in gaining that which he is so early destined to lose. His very best days are spent in learning—I speak of accomplishments only—to dance, to fence, to ride, to sing, sometimes to paint or play the flute, and in studying *tourneure* and *les graces*. Witness, at forty years of age, the fate of all those labours ! The man of fashion can no longer dance. His sword-arm, which bore the prize amidst so many spectators, is now shaken, nerveless, and palsied. His skill in horsemanship has degenerated into a soft-seated tilbury, sometimes to be driven by his groom. The colours of his water-drawings have long taken to flight, though they still hang, because they hang forgot. His manly voice can chaunt in ladies’ company but one weak song ; and which, though to every body known, is sometimes out of tune, and still oftener out of words ; his grace-

ful gentlemanly manners, his *extérieur brillant*, his *tournure*, *agremens*, *attentions*, have been exchanged for a species of indolent or vapid lounge, which presages pretty plainly how soon its owner is to become fat; and if, for the vanity of being heard, he yet attempts to pronounce that one last note which his flute had once so daringly adventured, his half asthmatic lungs soon announce how little strength there is now left him, for either that or any other sort of exertion. Thus the labour, toil, fortune, travel, expended in accomplishments, in time amount to nothing; or, like the tides of ocean, ever advance only to recede—succeed, but to retire!”

“Then, Sir, there is nothing to be done.”

“There *is* nothing to be done. For, hear me, the man that would persevere in any one of these acquirements after his twenty-fifth year, must necessarily either sink himself into a theatrical stage-dancer,—a fencing-master,—a singing machine for the amusement of the elite,—or the flute-player of an orchestra and a concert-room.”

“What! would you deprive him of his taste for music, Mr Madrake?”

“In some degree I would. In fact, there is nothing in nature half so vulgar or ridiculous as a known dancer, or a known musician. To be able merely to *assist* in any pretty little sing-song ‘fa la,’—to be able to strike a few neither ‘here nor there’ notes upon the guitar or piano-forte,—to be able to praise or condemn the parties whom it is most your interest to have praised or condemned,—must always form the *ne plus ultra* of a *gentlemanly* musical genius. To be, *bona fide*, an ‘out and out’ musician, with ear, skill, taste, science, execution, is in effect to be cut by every person of true fashionable negative distinction.”

“But we are not *all* fashionable, all *recherché*, Mr Madrake.”

“No; but we can be despised.”

“What, then, is to be done? what would you have us do?”

“Do nothing; in other words, look upon every thing with contempt, and upon every body with indifference. Pray fervently to be soon

translated into the other world, and turn eminently contented, pious, and religious."

" You have given us, however, rather an odd specimen of contentment, Mr Madrake."

" Yet I am quite contented. Contented to be sorry, and contented to be glad. I see into the ends of things; and that satisfaction helps to make me still more satisfied. I would have you, for instance, become instantly a devotee, and a teacher of Sunday evening schools."

" Mr Madrake !!!"

" You would be the better able to encounter the irremediable quantity of trials and troubles that are secured to such as profess the life of *single blessedness*."

" But should I not love my husband, if it chanced so, Mr Madrake?"

" He would prove either ill-natured, bad-hearted, selfish, tyrannical, whimsical—a fool, or something worse."

" Should he not love me?"

" He should not love *you*."

" Mercy !"

" Not mercy, I should think, but murder !"

"We should never have been, then, according to your account?"

"We should not."

"This is fearful, Mr Madrake. But yet, since it so happens that we *are* here, ought we not rather to contemplate the pleasing side—take advantage of the gentle, *innocent*, pleasures of life?"

"Precisely what I intend."

"Then why set aside every thing as wicked?"

"Pardon me, I would enjoy every thing that is most excellent."

"You have said it was impossible."

"Quite possible, provided always, as I said before, that you love nothing, and despise every thing; for sensibility must necessarily be the death of pleasure. It is not because we care for any one particular entertainment, or that we can hope to escape the headaches and contrempts which it has been known to produce, that we feel ourselves hurt at not being included among the list of its votaries. No; it is our pride, our *amiable sensibility*, that receives most

keenly the fancied wound—the intended neglect.”

“ We should, then, Sir, pass our lives in a state of inanition. We should endeavour to practise for ourselves a sort of stifled living death.”

“ We should only consider the world that is to come. It is for our interests, depend upon it, that we find here only the disjointed materials of existence.”

“ There may be something in that, Mr Madrake; and now, I suppose, you are to have nothing to do with the bachelors’ fête I hear them talking about ?”

“ On the contrary, my dear Miss Leslie, I take the greatest *possible* interest in the transaction; and, moreover, intend to pass the next ten weeks in flying about from feed to feed, rolling from ball to ball, and skipping from place to place, with all the empressement and energy of a frantic or frenzied young man who everywhere pays his first visit. My philosophy would enable me to sip the honey without en-

countering the wax—taste the sweets without finding the sting.”

“But will you not destroy yourself at this rate, Mr Madrake?”

“No; every thing bears its proportion; our efforts are seldom intended to surpass our strength. The time will come, and it already nearly approaches, when old age, the cramp, the gout, the *disinclination* to such festivities, will close, never again to reopen, upon the scene of social variety, as well as ceaseless dissipation. My wish is only to see, and to know, all that I can; and as I do not subject myself to the restraints of a *distingué* or an aristocrat, I should desire to experience every possible variety of men, minds, and manners; in fine, to know a *something* of the whole *dramatis personæ* of the grand drama of the world and of life!”

“You have staid too long, Mr Madrake,” said the young lady with a smile, which had, however, its own particular meaning in it: “Here is Mrs Fife.”

“No, no, no, no, I can’t be troubled!”

exclaimed the lady whom Miss Leslie had thus announced—talking to her maid, whom she had left behind her at the door. “No; I cannot, and will not, be bothered to put these things back into their places—I wish to have the use of my house;” and she forthwith deposited on a sofa the *materiel* of some hundred-and-fifty different kinds of work, every item of which she had *once* intended for the ornament of her establishment.

“How profitable is curiosity!” whispered Madrake.—“But, my dear Mrs Fife, what in the world do you really intend that we should suppose you to be about?”

“I intend, Mr Madrake, an *auto-da-fe*,” replied Mrs Fife.

“What! carry all this host of vase-cloths—patch-work—footstools—bell-ropes—bead-bracelets—pen-chairs—tinsel-racks and paper-hats—to the fire, did you say?”

“I burn,” answered the lady, “to see them instantly consumed.”

“*O finè! O fortuna!*”

“I was very desirous to know how my ward-

robe would look without them," continued Mrs Fife; "and though Betty, there, seems very anxious about saving some of the trumpery, I can tell her that *my* mind is made up. I am just preparing my work-table, too, for a beautiful lace-dress, which I intend to figure myself, and would rather see poor Betsy in a comfortable new print than crumpled up with any of that trumpery mish-mash.—By the bye, Miss Leslie should know something about this same trash, since it was she, you must know, who invented the most of it."

Miss Leslie looked at Madrake, and gave a sigh, which seemed to say, "it is a part of my duty to take the blame of every thing, right or wrong, upon myself."

"Yes, Miss, you may sigh; and I may join you, when I reflect upon the many hours——Pray, Mr Madrake," she added in a lively tone, "when saw you the Browns?"

"Horses will take cold—will founder and have inflammations—will get old and die. Under carriage won't last long—stays like to give way, and splinter-bar rather slight," answered

Mr Madrake, soliloquizing at the window, beneath which had just drawn gently up a fine new chariot and bays, containing Colonel Brown and daughter.

"Eh, well!" Mrs Fife continued; "none of us last long, Mr Madrake.—Ha-ow!!! Gracious mercy! what a peal was that!"

"The peelings of I'll not say what, indeed," cried Madrake; "only they belong to the Brownies, I suspect."

"Ah, you dexterous diable! you have heard, then, about the Browns and their West India property, haven't you? How much—Oh! my poor heart!—how much do they say they've got?"

"Why, Ma'am, his aunt left about nineteen thousand pounds, of which nineteen he has got nine—which is the proportion, I reckon."

"Only nine, Mr Madrake! Then there was no such thing as ninety?"

"On the contrary, I think they did wonders to get the nine; for, really, West India property exists but in the name. That new and splendid carriage, however, is meant, you know, to

insinuate what they cannot very well assert.—
You understand me, Mrs Fife?”

“ Nonsense, Mr Madrake ;” and she spoke in a low and soft voice, as if to intimate how perfectly she comprehended the drift of his remark—“ Nonsense, nonsense, Mr Madrake.”

“ It’s a fact. Orders were given to the coachmaker positively to spare no expense ; and the outward establishment is decidedly increased—*two* fellows now stuck up behind ; and the smart postillion sports tippily the velvet cap, and boots.”

“ Peep again, Mr Madrake, and tell me—for Miss Leslie and I can’t get away from our work—what sort of liveries they’ve got ?”

“ Enormous epaulettes over green and silver ; clean brushed tops, and”—

——“ Stay ! stop !—Oh, Mr Madrake, there they’re at the door.—Here, Sophia ! here, Madrake !—quick, fly into this other room.—Mercy ! Mr Madrake, you’ve dropped the carpet I began, made of small-edged clouts !”

In the flight, and before the discomfited party and their magazines could gain the ante-room,

Colonel and Miss Brown made their entrée, having hurried, it is rather more than suspected, on hearing something that seemingly derogated from the quiet equanimity of a morning levee.

“ Did you see that procession of old-clothes men ?” whispered the Colonel, as Miss Brown, with a look which only pretended to see space, advanced to examine a picture that hung upon the opposite wall.

Miss Brown hemm’d.

“ Worse than the day at Fife-hall yet, I should think. And Madrake, too—how he really encourages that odd body, Mrs Fife! O, here she comes.”

“ My dear Colonel! my dear Miss Brown! I am so delighted to see you !”

“ Ah, my dear Mrs Fife!—O, Miss Leslie, how do you do?—Your servant, my dear Mr Madrake!—O papa, I didn’t see Mr Madrake.”

“ Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh!”

“ Gracious me! Mr Madrake, how *can* you go on so?”

“ Behold the vanquished field of the cloth of clouts !” cried Madrake ; and he held aloft the abandoned emblem of industrious shreds—to which were yet attached the resplendent though dismembered trophies of a red waistcoat, military jacket, and a pair of well-stained pantaloons.

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! Well, I confess it is extremely, *extremely* rude, my dear Mrs Fife ! but really, upon this occasion—ha ! ha ! ha !” and Colonel Brown went off in a fit of laughter,—a kind of facetiousness in its way which Madrake had the art to prolong, by dangling about the legless limbs of the pantaloons ; one of which, be it known, Mrs Fife on a former day had smartly amputated somewhere above the knee.

Mrs Fife was getting frantic. But anxious to obtain an explanation by what Colonel Brown’s uncommon mirth had been excited, she composed herself to complain to Miss Brown of her father’s unaccountable spirits. But that lady’s face, for reasons unknown, was already deep buried in the silken lining of her ermine muff. “ Sophia, my dear !” she said in a sort

of despair, "can *you* explain to me the meaning of Mr Madrake's wit?"

She was answered by a painfully half-suppressed "he! he!"

"Gracious goodness!" she continued, looking up, "what's that you are dangling, Mr Madrake?—Merciful heavens! Mr M'Farlane's pantaloons!"

Here Miss Leslie's frolic sobs were no longer to be stifled. Miss Brown fled hastily from the room; the Colonel relapsed; and this time Mrs Fife herself accompanied him. Madrake began gravely to dance pousette to the veteran small clothes, and Colonel Brown's servants below set up an accidental shout, under a false supposition that the noise above proceeded from a fight in the adjoining street.

The party were first awakened from their various convulsions by Madrake violently ringing at the bells.

"Good heavens! Mr Madrake! do you really intend to expose us?"

"Any thing to save your lives, even at the expense of your reputations, good people. You

know that it was Zeuxis who laughed himself to death.—You are not wanted,” he added, as a couple of servants hastily entered the room.

“ Say rather, that we have avenged the memory of the Kicklecackles !” exclaimed Colonel Brown, slowly recovering from his fit. “ But what in all the world’s the matter with Mrs Fife ?”

“ Mrs Fife seems seriously wounded, Sir,” said Madrake. “ My dear Miss Leslie, I am glad to know that you have got back your senses. But don’t you think the lady’s laughter begins to sound very like a groan, eh ?”

“ Eh ! what ?” And Colonel Brown recovered arms, or rather legs, with an agility that would have done honour to the chief of a rifle corps.

“ She does not recover,” said Miss Brown—now reapproaching the parties with great sang froid. “ Better give her a little of my smelling salts.”

“ Bring cold water first,” cried Madrake. “ It is nothing, my dear Miss Leslie, nothing particular.—Mrs Fife has only fainted.”

Miss Leslie gave a loud shriek.

"O, my dear Miss Leslie, do not be so alarmed, my dear; she will soon recover, soon recover. Here, Cecilia, hold you the glass till I talk to these men.—Be still with your horses there, you rascals," he called aloud, hastily opening and shutting the window again—"Devils!"

"O, Colonel, this is a sad business!" cried Miss Leslie, who now felt greatly terrified. "Do you know, I think it was Mr Madrake's talking about the man that died of a laugh that threw her into this terrible state."

"Sprinkle a little more of the water on her temples, Miss Brown," said Madrake carelessly, yet still anxiously regarding the pallid face of the now lifeless Mrs Fife.

"I must say, I generally get much easier through than that," observed Miss Brown, as she dipped the tips of her taper fingers in the glass.

"She is gone!" exclaimed Colonel Brown, who had only been accustomed to see his daughter faint; or, more probably, pretend to do so.

"She is certainly very ill, I must confess,"

said Madrake, who now began to feel not altogether very comfortable himself. "But then there cannot be any immediate *danger*, one should think?"

"O, no; no *immediate danger*," cried Miss Brown, quietly tying the strings of her ermine tippet. "Why, Miss Leslie, my dear, you look as dead as Mrs Fife!"

"Oh, Miss Brown, how can you talk so? But, Mr Madrake, don't you think we should have advice?"

"My dear Miss Leslie!" returned Madrake, now very much perplexed. "But, pray compose yourself, and do not tremble so. Perhaps she is now recovering."

"It's all over! It's all over!"

"O, pray, papa, don't frighten poor Miss Leslie so."

"It's all over! It's all over!" repeated the Colonel.

"Well, I dare say it will soon be all over; for I think I see a little colour come again.—Can you tell me, papa," she added in a whisper, "what o'clock it is?"

“What think you of that change now, Madrake?—Cecilia, my dear, it’s just four o’clock.”

“Four o’clock! papa?”

“Hush! my dear. It looks so odd, you know, to be inquiring the time, and any body on their death-bed. Poor Madrake, and that Miss Leslie, how I pity them!”

“But, papa, I say we *must* go,” returned Miss Brown, breaking out of the under voice: “You know that I am to dine with Lady Methodical to-day, who never waits; and that I take nearly two hours to arrange my head.”

“Pray, whom do you expect to see at Lady Methodical’s, Miss?”

This voice belonged to the tomb; for it was the agreeable signal of the resurrection of Mrs Fife, who had *continued* in her swoon till, like Miss Brown, she had been forced off her guard by a new subject for discourse.

“All a pretence,” whispered the Colonel to his daughter, as the rest of the party helped to raise the no longer drooping head of the reviving Mrs Fife: “A mere scheme to ascertain what was likely to be said of her behind her back!”

"I am so shocked, papa, at having spoken of Lady Methodical's party. But, you know, Anne *will* take such a time with my head."

"I certainly thought her senses were returned, even before Miss Brown mentioned the circumstance of the colour, though my fears could not just be so suddenly dissolved," said Madrake to himself, by way of saying something in the style of congratulation, we presume.

"My dear, dear Mrs Fife!" and pressing the restored lady's hand to her lips in a fervour of unrepressed joy, Miss Leslie burst into tears.

"Well, good morning to you all," said Colonel Brown; and he paused to contemplate the scene before him.

"Oh, come quick, papa; I'm afraid we're going to have another scene," said his daughter tugging him along. "I say, papa, would you really wish me to displease Lady Methodical, by breaking in upon her established hours?"

"Not for the world, my dear. I was only thinking that I had never seen Miss Leslie look half so pretty before. Such tenderness, too!" he continued, pulling up the glass of the carriage

so as to shut out the person of a poor woman with two starved infants at her back, who approached to ask help—"I almost thought she resembled that figure of Charity you have got in the Boudoir at Bertie."

"Well, papa, that is the figure I *do so much* dislike."

"So much dislike, Cecilia! You mustn't say so before people of taste."

"O, it is only the *subject* I so very much dislike. The Venus at Bertie is much more to my mind."

"Why, you know, as to the Venus at Bertie, my dear, it is the finest thing we have got in Scotland. But I am surprised you should think so very little of the first; for truly, between you and I, the anatomy of the one figure is fully more correct than the other."

"This carriage goes very soft, don't you think, papa?" said the young lady, to whom anatomy was almost as disagreeable a subject as the likeness which her father had just discovered in Miss Leslie to the figure of Charity in the Boudoir of Bertie.

"So very comfortable, I think I could pass the day in it, my dear."

"Well then, papa, pray let us extend our round to-morrow. Suppose, after we get to Lady Methodical's, we should go on to Lady Aloof's. It will look civil, at any rate, you know, to inquire for their sick relation Lady Lumberfield."

"Why, I rather think we must look in upon the Lumsdaines to-morrow."

"The Lumsdaines, papa! Do you pretend to compare *them* with the Aloofs?"

"My dear, very far from it. But, you know, sometimes one must go a little out of one's way. You recollect that favourite policy of the Hyndfords, I suppose?"

Miss Brown, lady-like, looked down, to await the fiat.

"Not only keep in sight the freeholders of your own particular county, but have an eye over the people of influence in your neighbour's.—These people's vote may come into play some day or other; and as I should much prefer Sir George Terrorfield to that pink-faced boy

Maringle for a son-in-law, I think we ought to possess ourselves of some little influence in that quarter, in case he should get rather negligent of these things himself. I believe he has only had time to call once upon the Lumsdaines since he came to town; and does not expect to be able to call again, I suppose."

"You need not trouble yourself to pay the Lumsdaines any attention on *that* ground," returned Miss Brown rather firmly. "You will never see me Lady Terrorfield. He is very boisterous and extraordinary in his manners, it is true; and very successful in engrossing every body's attention to himself: Nevertheless, he is not to be trusted—your general admirers are never famous for early marriages; and Sir George must be a man of thirty at the least. I am told he paid his addresses to five-and-twenty of the most beautiful young women in Bath at once; merely for the purpose of shutting out the advances of every body else. I much prefer that lad Maringle, though he seems but a sort of Zany, too, at the best."

"He is a second son, is he not?"

“Only a second son, papa; but his mother, Lady Maringle, tells me that she thinks him by far the most amiable of the two.”

“And all which is—mere humbug.”

“Il est vrai, il est vrai, il est vrai. Only, we must just wink at these things, papa. The son of a baronet, too, is always something; and if it be true that the elder brother will be able to get himself darned in amongst these formidable Aloofs, I think the connexion would turn out not quite so despicable. Besides all this, papa, upon my word I am going in three-and-twenty; and therefore cannot, as formerly, afford to dismiss my lovers with impunity.”

“And is that red and white boy of a Maringle really your lover, Cecilia? I think it was only last week that somebody introduced you to one another.”

“Only last week was it?—But, pray, desire them to be rather a little earlier with the carriage to-day: The Methodicals are so very punctual.”——

The father and daughter having accordingly dined with Lady Methodical, were again next

morning upon their way to visit that lady, who, agreeably to etiquette, expected either a call or a card from each of the individuals who had graced her banquet of the preceding day.

“ Well, papa, since there is nothing to be expected from Sir George Terrorfield, I really wish you would excuse me going after these Lumsdaines at all.”

“ Well, then, we can let it be a little later in the day; and then none of the family will be at home. But I have other reasons for your visiting these people, Cecilia. Major-General Jacobson has requested it; and it would be worse than folly to thwart a man of his stamp. You know they live next door; and have become, I don’t know how, the greatest cronies possible.”

“ Bad taste of the General, certainly. However I am ready to obey you both, provided you will take me to my dear favourite Aloofs first.”

“ Not *now*, upon any account.”

“ Why, I think this fine equipage might do it. And then, Lady Lumberfield is very sick, I am told.”

“ Some of Mrs Fife’s nonsense; for she must

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know every thing, I suppose. But, Cecilia, my dear, you mistake if you think your fine equipage will do any thing for you with the Aloofs. It is precisely the sort of thing that would make them take fright. You must rather appear to shun them, as it were. They will understand the *ruse*, and, at the same time, give you credit for twice the fortune to which you may now pretend."

"Well, papa, I begin to perceive that I have now got no wisdom in my head."

"At least compared with me, my dear."

"Well, papa, don't let your wisdom beguile you into too long a visit at Lady Methodical's; or into too long an argument. For, though she appears to be greatly charmed with your conversation, she really is not, and complains of the irregularity of your proceedings the moment you are gone."

"What! does she pretend to accuse *me* of emprossement?"

"O horrors! no:—But softly, this is her house; and, of course, like her friend Mrs Wednesday, her Ladyship must be at home."

Her Ladyship *was* at home.—Her Ladyship was also afraid of being headached; and would scarce enter into any kind of talk with her morning visitors. Colonel Brown, after what his daughter had just declared, would keep by his new-summoned reserve. Miss Brown would follow the example of both.

This automaton exhibition was repeated at Lady Maringle's, whose second son, as we have just heard, had lately discovered a sudden penchant for our disagreeable friend Miss Brown, whose charms were now again to be enhanced by the reputation of a vast West India succession; and which coming so opportunely into play, served very particularly to support the more respectable lairdship of Bertie Castle. The parties next adjourned to Mrs Lumsdaine's.

Mrs Lumsdaine, her son and daughters, were all at home. They were entertaining at lunch a Lady Lazyhead, a foreigner, who also carried with her a son and daughter. These mongrels were come to look after a little property somewhere in the neighbourhood.

Miss Brown, though not short-sighted, made use of her glass, and observed that the mother was a simpleton, the daughter a see-saw languishing Lydia, and the son a squint-eyed porpoise; rounded like Falstaff at his best, and puckered to the throat like King Henry's jester Patch.

Miss Brown felt inclined to cut them all in a string; but Colonel Brown, who would do the polite to the Lumadaines, would also inquire for their visitors' dear papa, who, he was accordingly informed, was safe in Abraham or Beelzebub's bosom—we cannot tell which.

The papa, so inquired after, was represented as a person who had expired merely from the too great weight of his honours. Colonel Brown, however, detected in him only a dexterous adventurer, who had once had luck to be in the way on a distribution of knighthoods. The consideration, however, that the objects he had left behind him might have, like the daughter of Cardinal Mazarine, a few hundred pistoles to throw over a window upon the crowd, made him swallow the knight-errantry, as well

as the knighthood; and also to promise them, while they remained at their hotel, the honour of a visit. Miss Brown proffered a similar honour, wisely determining, however, to detach them as soon as possible from their first friends the Lumsdaines, who, being still in trade, she resolved should feel that they were so.

CHAPTER X.

St Valentine's day kept.

ALL Misses who must flirt, and boys who love to tell that they think themselves very pretty fellows, constitute the *litterati* who, like the heroes of Epping hunt, take the field in honour of St Valentine and his birth-day.

A certain unexplainable madness, however, in search of the *recherché*, had induced the beaux esprits on this occasion to employ altogether a new-fangled system of love-sighing correspondence. Agreeably, then, to this taste, instead of the usual rhymes of *thine*, *mine*, and *Valentine*, recourse was now had to the more quaint, though not so very regular conceit, of "Mr Valentine's compliments."

The combined heads of Messrs Vonpepper and M'Ginger, amongst the rest, accordingly concocted, under patronage of the said Mr Valentine's compliments, the following admirable and highly finished distich, in honour of their *quondam* friend Miss Catharine Kicklecack: to wit—

“ O, dear gifted Kicklecack,
With that bone upon thy back ;
Which, though large and very long,
Hath no chance beside thy tongue.”

Much after the same magnificence of imagination did blooming Mr Augustus Maringle, with a few ornamental Cupids and kisses, despatch the following quotation to his dear Cecilia, whom he had promised to meet that same evening at a rout, and whose *future prospects* his fond love had *first* taken the trouble minutely to investigate, before suffering his baby voice either to sigh or to approve. He also, in sympathy with his cotemporaries Vonpepper and M'Ginger, took the liberty of sending, in his own open fair hand, the three times enclosed request (under cover also of Mr Valentine's compliments) to Cecilia—

“ Then, Celia, come by night ;
Let stars beam ere so bright,
When Celia comes, the day
Can ne’er be far away !”

By way of a little wholesome correction, however, to Mr Maringle’s fanciful little sonnet—on the outer envelope of which might be defined the unmistakable symbols of a wreath of laurels, and underneath the all-transcendent synonyme of Augustus—an unknown hand had just sent Miss Brown, for the third time, Mr Valentine’s compliments, contained also in two quoted lines, as follows :—

“ Primal snow to her is pale,
Was the lily of the vale.”

Under which, in place of the blushing kiss of welcome, with the figures 2 and 0 promiscuously dispersed around, was the worse than sallow-featured visage of the young lady herself—terrible in ugliness, and served up in all the horrors of an *inveterate* likeness.

“ Well, he is a dear child, that little James Methodical, after all !” was Miss Brown’s hasty exclamation, on receipt of this delectable favour.

“ He has sent me, like Augustus Maringle, such a pretty little Valentine; and has made such a pretty likeness of me besides.” And the young lady let drop the whole concern, much as she seems to have esteemed it, into the fire.

“ My dear Cecilia, you cannot call that a *beautiful* likeness surely,” said her father, as the sudden suction caused by the flame opened up ‘ Mr Valentine’s compliments,’ and so as to display in full characters the wan and spectral features of his daughter’s caricature. “ Why, my dear, I never saw any thing so ghastly in all my life.”

“ Why, you know, papa, we can’t expect a child of *his* years to draw and colour both. I assure you, it was very wonderful indeed.”

“ Well, I do think it *was* like nothing earthly; but why, pray, put it into the fire? You know that Lord E—— himself esteems me a perfect connoisseur in paintings; and then, for that *mediocre* boy, James Methodical, to *draw* so very wonderfully”—

“ Why, papa, it *was* a curious enough sort

of circumstance; only, I looked so much at the poetry, that I took but little notice of the painting."

"And were the lines original, too, Cecilia?"

"As far as I know, papa."

"What! dull James Methodical another Raphael, and another Moore! I suppose we shall hear of him as a second Mozart next."

"Papa"—and ingenious Miss Brown had well nigh confessed the truth. Like some people, however, who fear to expose the downright undiguisèd fact, she would deceive, so long as she could deceive successfully.

"Well, my dear?"

"O, nothing: I was only thinking that James Methodical might, after all, have got somebody to write the verses for him."

"But how came you to think that they were his, my dear?"

"Merely because he wrote them, papa."

"But the writing was not a school-boy's hand, my dear; far less was it after the school of poor James Methodical, I suspect."

"But his name was at the bottom, papa; and so fine, you could scarce distinguish it.—And in fact, papa, there lies the wonder."

"There lies the wonder, indeed: but I ask you once more, my love, what *could possibly* induce you to throw so many wonders into the fire?"

"And so, papa, you would really have had me encourage that silly child's folly? for you know, in *some cases*, the least possible approbation becomes both mischievous and dangerous."

"Really, Cecilia, when you could have encouraged Mr Augustus Maringle's muse, you needn't have been so very severe upon poor little James Methodical's."

"Why, papa, that is precisely the very reason why I have thought fit to retain Mr Maringle's. I shall never marry till I know what has become of the Honourable Charles James Aloof."

"What! after your long tirade in favour of Baronets and Baronet's sons?"

"All speculation, papa. I am beginning to vere round to Miss Hyndford's opinion."

"Which is?"

“ That, unless a woman procures for herself the support of a tremendous jointure—these were her very words—she will only have the satisfaction of feeling herself annihilated some thirty or forty years before her time.”

“ But wasn’t you telling me that you had promised to meet this same youth at somebody’s *gala to-night*?”

“ All mere nonsense; or rather, it was a contrivance of mine, in order that he might find out that I could change my mind.”

“ Cecilia! Why——!!!

“ Nay, papa, do not stare so. I tell you I cannot *endure* second sons. They are like old maids—only chosen out of compassion.”

“ Go to Lady Maringle, and tell her this.”

“ Why, I am not a little afraid of that good-natured woman. I am told she wants *both* her sons for the Misses Aloof.”

“ Then you may still want that side of a cherry-tree, Augustus Maringle, my love?”

“ No, papa, I want music. I want Mr Squeake.”

"Mr Squeake, my dear! I thought you couldn't endure that creature in Fife?"

"But I didn't consider him there, papa?"

"Consider!" said the man of war.

Miss Brown went on—"I heard him give Clementina Nonsuch a lesson the other day, and I never heard better execution in my life."

"The lady's own talent, my love."

"La, papa! how can you say so? I am sure every body allows that she has no taste. And then her piano-forte playing—such bad fingering: and she makes so much noise with the loud pedals, and such a thrum-thrumming with the bass, that, really, I——But you *know*, papa, she can neither sing nor play."

"Well, you may be in the right, my dear," calmly returned her father, who could not be troubled to defend even Miss Nonsuch on this occasion, and who was, moreover, very indifferent about the result. "But, my dear, I beg you may never say *la*. It is a very horrid exclamation."

"La, papa! did I really say so?"

Her papa gave a short dry hem.

“ Well, I beg pardon, papa. But what about the Lazyheads?”

“ You will call for them, I dare say?”

“ Well, papa, I have not made up my mind. I have thought upon this business all day, till my head ached; and now I am as perplexed on the subject as ever. That they are people one *should* pay some little attention to, is true: But then, their coming through these odious Lumsdaines—these *bore*s—I cannot venture upon them.”

“ Nor to Mrs Cleghorn’s dinner party, I presume?”

“ No—*that* I have long resolved upon. You see how much Lady Aloof’s daughters are thought of for going nowhere.—Of all vulgar people, what are called ‘fashionable people’ are the worst. To go to every body’s house—to be talked of in every street—to be recognized, shewn, and deciphered as the *punchinello* of the mob—could any thing be more mortifying and absurd?”

“ But, Miss Brown, you don’t consider that

Lady Aloof's daughters are perfectly proverbial for their pride."

"I admire them very much."

"Nobody else then, it would appear, does them that honour."

"Now, papa, how *can* you say so? Don't they preside over a Sunday school?"

"The love of praise, as Pope has it."

"Pope was no poet," said the young lady, who was not over-fond of those authors who practised *truisms* in their day.

"Pope no poet, Miss Brown! Surely"—

—"We were not talking of Pope, papa!" cried the young lady, looking rather stormy.

"But, to have done, I am not going to these Cleghorns."

"And so, then, I must go alone—go to their house to insult them! You know how *much*, on my account, they wished that you should be there."

"The precise reason why I cannot possibly consent to it. The Misses Aloof always suspect obliging people; for they say, very wisely, 'that whenever people seek support from above, *something must be wrong*.'"

“ But then after *accepting*, you know ?”

“ O, as for that, you know one must move one way or another. Besides, there are many persons who make a point of sending their excuse, or, more properly speaking, their refuse, just upon the day appointed.”

“ My dear,” said Colonel Brown faintly, and preparing to make a so-so last appeal to his daughter’s humanity ; “ My dear”——

But at that instant the hall-door bell was a second time smartly rung, and a visitor was announced.

The gentleman, for it happened to be a gentleman, happened likewise to be one of the party expected at Mrs Cleghorn’s. He was a middle-aged man, to whom Miss Brown, after her twenty-ninth year, would have had no very particular objection ; since he was the son of a *nouveau riche*, who was in the habit of setting up his future representatives in a carriage, generally upon the day of their nuptials.

Young ladies are sometimes not very unwilling to make a diverge from a subject which does not exactly please them ; and as the military man

had just been worsted, the party was allowed to remain for a while rather *hors de combat*.

“By the bye, Colonel,” said Mr Akenside at last, for want of any thing better to say, “are you to make one at Mrs Cleghorn’s to-day? I wish I could hear of any one going there besides myself.”

Colonel Brown looked blank, but contrived to nod an assent.

“And the young lady too, I suppose,” continued Mr Akenside; “and that is being what I may call *très sociable*.”

The young lady bridled, while her father hastened to say, “My daughter, Sir, is not in the habit of visiting such people;”—for the childish vanity of a proud man, rendered still more proud by the contagious vicinity of a bad-hearted child, was pleased to gratify itself with the sacrifice of another.

“Ay, just so,” cried Mr Akenside, who had taken snuff, and who was busy looking over a book containing some prints of the celebrated Houghton Gallery, which lay upon the table.

"And so we are to have Miss Brown with us, are we?"

"My daughter, Sir? No!"

"Why, Colonel, one would suppose you were storming Seringapatam. I beg Miss Brown's pardon—I really made a mistake. I know not what could have induced me to think her, for a moment, an acquaintance of that odd body, Mrs Cleghorn."

"Her husband was certainly very unfortunate," said Colonel Brown, falling.

"O, shocking! before his death."

"He was a very hospitable man," said Colonel Brown, falling still lower.

"O, the most hospitable man in the world! I do not remember ever having seen a better table."

"Don't you think Mrs Cleghorn dresses her daughter ridiculously fine, Mr Akenside?" said Miss Brown, preparing to repair the pendant of a pearl ear-ring and drop—the part appendage of a set of immense value, just re-deposited in its own red case;—"Really, people who have

only a *little*, should endeavour to suit their tastes to their circumstances."

"Why, really, Ma'am, you talk quite sensibly," rejoined Mr Akenside, simpering: "Mr Madrake would have been delighted with such a speech."

"Mr Madrake's a sad man, Mr Akenside," said the young lady, wisely shaking her head: "Sad——But, by the bye, did papa tell you of the fine chatter I had the other day with Miss Frolic?"

"Cecilia, my dear, you perfectly amaze me," said her father, who did not wish her so quickly to get rid of her aristocratic opinions, however troublesome they might sometimes prove;—"What *will* Mr Akenside think of you! You know you are not at all intimate with that wild girl, Frolic; and you are by this time aware, I presume, that she detests you."

"There was some reason in that, however," observed the young lady, looking grave and mysteriously important; "I had no wish to be invited to a house where there never was any body to be seen."

"Dear me, nobody to be seen!"

"Nobody *I* should wish to see, Mr Akenside."

"What a wonderful talent you have at being correct, Miss Brown. Well, I must tell Mr Madrake of this"——

—"But are you really going, Mr Akenside?"

"Alas! alas!"—and Mr Akenside, hat in hand, stepped backwards.

"Well, good morning.—Tiresome man that, papa. Heigh-ho!"

"Heigh-ho! Why Heigh-ho?"

"Did I say Heigh-ho, papa? Well, that was very stupid. But I say, papa," she added, gently approaching his ear, "I have a little secret to tell you, and you must promise to make the most of it for me.—Pray get me a rich husband, papa; for I would rather *that* than the Misses Aloof and their Sunday schools yet."

CHAPTER XI.

Vult, non vult dare Galla mihi: nec dicere possum,
Quod vult, et non vult, quid sibi Galla velit.

MARTIAL.

MISS BROWN, though not over accustomed to keep by her intentions, could yet maintain upon occasion the noble, though not equal merits, of both obstinacy and constancy. She did *not* go to Mrs Cleghorn's. She did worse: she cajoled her silly father to send his apology along with her own; prevailed on him to throw neglect and contempt upon a woman, whose husband had been, according to his own confession, the friend of his youth, and the companion of his heart—for Colonel Brown was still capable of appreciating the happy influence of a generous character, were he, like his cotemporary Mr Lumsdaine, once abstracted from that air of frigid

pride and stifling punctilio, in which his life was now, under his daughter's management, encircled as with an ice-berg. That amiable young lady, however, got him persuaded to recover from his suddenly pretended cold ; to go to see an act of a play ; and afterwards to spend an hour and a half at the —— Club. As for herself, warmed with the idea of having asserted and preserved her own immaculate consequence, and with having conferred an additional *pseudo* cut upon Mrs Cleghorn and her family, by means of her father's ill-timed complaisance, she set herself to cogitate upon her intended new lace dress ; to mark down some twenty new songs for Mr Squeake ; and next, to pen off a polite note, appointing the morrow as the day of meeting.

She had been informed that that gentleman would only undertake *some* voices, and she now feared, after the sort of cat's interest she had taken in Clementina Nonsuch, more than any thing, the being condemned as a bad one. Lastly, she selected a small list from a larger one, in order to secure a select evening party,

which she intended to give some time early in the spring; and to write a rather elaborate card to an aunt of her own—who having consented to marry merely because she had been asked to do so, was not now one in that high sphere of *ton* and pretension to which her more uncomeatable niece aspired—and which note was to excuse herself from attending her party, though she took care to dash in a number of those persons' names to whose entertainments she had already been compelled to attend; or rather, whose visits she had had the previous inclination to make out.—To conclude, Miss Brown spent more than her usual time at her devotions, under the influence of a vague fear lest she should never get the match to her mind; and might, therefore, possibly be forced before her time into a saintship: for it is true that she had fixed her thoughts, since yesterday, upon the eldest son of my Lord Aloof, while he again had settled his heart upon the only child of a Peeress. In the mean time, by way of a little by-play, she had just made up her mind upon the style in which she should reject that perfection of in-

describables Madrake, whose *badinage* she had all along mistaken as solicitation for her favour; and with whom she was only happy to be so far pleased, that he always appeared to play a "first fiddle" at any place at which she had yet had the fortune to encounter him.

Next day she sat down to await Mr Squeake. She was not expecting that he would answer her summons just so quick this time, and she had, pour passer le temps, taken up a pamphlet, supposed to be written by the eldest Miss Aloof, —who was deformed,—upon the folly of all trivial accomplishments, and which began with music, when the before-mentioned gentleman, preferring his usual quantum of "hopes" and "how d'ye do's," was ushered into the presence.

"O, it is you, Mr Squeake! I thought that tinkle must have been some poor body with a subscription paper."

Mr Squeake sent forth a few "Ah, really's,—
"D'yar me's," &c. and took the seat the young lady now condescendingly pointed out for his benefit.

"Now, in the first place, Mr Squeake," the

young lady began, "what is to be done with my voice? I think I am going to be stifled when I attempt to touch G."

"And yet you seldom anticipate the notes," said the all-obliging Mr Squeake.

"I seldom anticipate any thing, Mr Squeake."

Mr Squeake managed the smile that offered to rise at this slight misconception, as he replied with assumed gravity, "Your voice shall not only take in G. Ma'am, but G. in *octave*."

"G. in octave !!!"

"If you will give it up to my management," gently subjoined Mr Squeake.

"O, that of course. And I am so happy, my dear Mr Squeake, that *you* should really think so much of it."

"Very clear equal tone, indeed."

"Pray, what songs shall I have then, in the mean time?"

"Chords—scales—and quavers."

"Ah, yes! You're in the right, Mr Squeake—Chords, scales, and quavers. But, then, just *one* little song, don't you think, to let people hear that I can sing?"

"O, you insist upon it, I see. Pray, Ma'am, what song would you wish?"

"*Flow on, thou shining river?*" inquired the lady.

"A Duo."

"*Then say, my heart, while wildly beating?*"

"A mawkish hackney."

"Ah! it is so pretty!"

"Yes, it is pretty. But pretty, Ma'am, is sometimes not to the purpose."

"Ah! I must have it, Mr Squeake. For, do you know, if I could only drawl through it any way, with two or three of your pencil notes here and there upon the music, every body would set me down as a singer."

"Yes, they would certainly *set you down*." For Mr Squeake had lately accomplished himself in that most useful art of complimenting a pupil, and at the same time of ridiculing her to himself, and sometimes to every body else.

"Well, then, let's have it now. I am so much in the humour for it, and you shall find me so tractable."

"To be in the humour always promises

something," returned the gentleman; and he began arranging the music on the piano-forte.

Having at last got a scale of notes to be performed, and having chimed over the song himself, Mr Squeake prepared to give out his first lesson, and the young lady, as was desired, began.

"Very well—very well—very good—Ah! very good indeed! But, stop one moment—I beg a hundred pardons, Ma'am, for interrupting you—Don't you think, when this *stanza* finishes for the second time, it should be sung *so*? The half note has so much elegance—so much *naïveté* in it, I should almost say."

"Ah, yes! Mr Squeake, if one had only the voice to attempt these things."

"And why *not* have the voice to attempt these things? Nothing so easy, I assure you. Now notice how I manage it.—Did you hear?"

"O, you know, every thing is so easy to *you*, Mr Squeake."

"O, easy! It is the easiest thing in the world, Ma'am; and so extremely—so extremely sweet. See, here it is again upon the instrument."

“Mr Squeake,” said the *tractable* young lady, in a voice husky with suppressed rage, “I hope you will not take any offence, but I must tell you that there is nothing so sweet as simplicity; and, Sir, if you’ll permit me to sing the song according to my own taste, you will find it a much better plan—you’ll allow me—for us both.”

“There is no doubt of that, Ma’am; and I agree with you entirely,” politely returned Mr Squeake; who, as in former times, had an eye not so much to the lady’s improvement as to the lady’s influence in some other quarter. “Certainly,” he added in a more lively strain, “certainly your opinion must, I should think, be correct. You have heard a great deal of the best music, and you have passed your life, one might say, amongst persons of first-rate talents and accomplishments.”

“Yes, yes, yes, I *know*, Mr Squeake;” for the young lady’s tact penetrated at once the true motives of this harangue. “But listen to me for a moment. I am just going over to Lady Lochend’s—in plainer words, to G—— Square;

and as I know all the dowagers in that quiet séjour, I think I may be able to prevail on some of them to appreciate your merit. These ladies, you know, have always a great many relations handed in to them from the country, and therefore dabble much in recommendations, and so forth; for their actions are, I must say, much oftener regulated by good intention, than by purse-pride."

"You do not, however, intend to insinuate to them, that I have too much time on my hands?" said Mr Squeake simpering rather suspiciously.

"Too much time! O, dear, no. I mean to tell them, that if it had not been for my voice, I should never have been able to engage you."

"And depend upon it, Ma'am, I shall say the same thing."

"But I am going *now*, Mr Squeake: I expect to see Mrs General Jacobson here every instant for that very purpose."

"Ah, sure, how odd! But good morning, good morning, Ma'amselle."

"Stay, stay, Mr Squeake," cried the young lady, as that gentleman was now gently and

softly closing the wing of a door behind him; "I have got something very particular to say to you. Pray, what am I to do about a duet—a duet, Mr Squeake? I should wish to sing one with you occasionally."

"Pray, what shall it be then, Ma'am?" demanded Mr Squeake, not over-pleased at finding himself pulled about like another check-string, we may believe.

"Something simple. Bring it with you on Monday. I shall manage the part that does not go high; and you must squeak away and embellish as you can. This plan—pray, sit down, Mr Squeake—should please every body shouldn't you think?"

"The plan is charming!" said Mr Squeake, pulling out his watch.

"Well, I think we may as well talk it over now," said the young lady, observing him. "You are in no hurry, Sir, to be away, I hope?"

"Not in any *great* hurry, Ma'am."

"Put up your watch, then, Mr Squeake. One would suppose you were a doctor of physic, instead of music."

“ Well, what shall it be ?” said Mr Squeake, now in no hurry, and contentedly putting up his watch again. “ There are some beautiful *ariettes* from Rossini’s Pastorales, and I think I can remember one which I think will suit you. But don’t allow me to prescribe ; perhaps you have got one already in your mind, which you may prefer to every thing else.”

“ That man will tell every body that he was shut up all day in our house, and I shall never be able to deny it,” thought Miss Brown to herself on the receipt of this speech.—“ Pray, what were you saying, Mr Squeake ?” she demanded aloud. “ But I see I must not detain you ; you have got a great deal to do ; and your valuable time, Mr Squeake, must not be made a monopoly of.”

“ I shall not look after any body *this* hour,” replied Squeake ; “ so it does not signify my being late now. I have had, every body will allow, but too good an excuse for my absence.” And Mr Squeake simpered still more delightedly.

“ O, pray, don’t make it *my* fault, Mr Squeake.

But the fact is, I must ask you at any rate to cut short your visit; for I am sure Mrs Jacobson must be at the door by this time.—O, no apologies, no apologies—Good morning, Sir, good morn— Pray, William, do you think you see Mrs Jacobson coming?”

“ I shall look, Ma’am.”

“ Ay, do. But you must first tell Harriet to look after my snow-boots. I think I shall wear them to-day.”

In half an hour afterwards Mrs General Jacobson arrived; and Miss Brown, with the help of Miss Harriet, put the last clasp into her pelisse. A large shawl was next produced, and the ladies then proceeded on their expedition to G— Square.

It was one of those dry, hard-frosted days, in which it is sometimes the fashion—though rather going out—for the ladies of Edinburgh to take exercise in public on foot; and our two acquaintances accordingly *enfiléd* the Bridges with that suppressed and timidish sort of gait, which entitles people to look so interestingly diffident and perplexed, and at the same time

to *cut*, without sense of remorse, as many of their less particular friends and relations as they may chance to meet.

There was much hubbub, for it was three o'clock, and Mrs General Jacobson was much occupied in getting easily through the swarm. Miss Brown, however, was a great deal less particular when jostled against by any one; and could, while apparently looking straight before her, observe and detect all that was going on. In particular, she could distinguish the glib tongue of a young man, who kept chattering aloud to his companion, *crescendoing* it in proportion as the rattle of carts, carriages, and coaches happened to increase. Miss Brown might, by retrenching her pace, have compelled the scandal-pie to pass her; but, anxious as she generally felt herself to be diverted without ever condescending to appear so, she compelled her companion to get on, for fear of sustaining so great a misfortune.

In the mean time, she had undisputed intelligence that the young gentleman's *eyes* were raking about as well as his thoughts, as might

be gathered from the following single-handed dialogue, which seemed to disdain as unnecessary the sometimes agreeable assistance of an occasional response.

“ Pretty horse that. I suppose you know that the wight he carries is no less than the quarter-master of the ——— dragoons. Handsome man, and knows it. Doesn't think that he would be any the better of scarlet, and therefore always dresses in plain clothes. You know, of course, that the women are all in love with him. He knows it too; and yet his manners are no ways affected, nor does he really appear to want sense. A little further on, and direct in the face, he is going to meet young Squint; an ill-favoured wretch, who sees nobody but himself. His duty is to see double, however—his own double I presume—and ride over the same ground four hours a-day. He is then to be seen taking a walk; after which he is to dine off one dish, for the sake of an excellent and ‘ wear me well ’ stock of health; and then”—here the voice grew rather indistinct—“ But look here, only observe that fellow with the face

like a fish. A pickle! a pickle-man's son.—I forget who told me, for nobody knows him— But hush! here comes Mrs D—— and her last daughter—‘ I hope (bowing) I hope you’re very well, Ma’am.’ Bad marrying girls all these D——s. D. C. told me he did all he could to stop three of them in their marriages. But ’twouldn’t do—they only ran the faster into it the moment they began to ask his advice. One of them (the last married) insisted on putting off the match for a month; but that was only, every body says, to get quit of the general mourning.—Heavens! what a lot of *us*. But look here, Tommy, do you see that thing coming stamping down upon us?—Pray let me go on: You are so confoundedly fond of interruptions—That, Sir, is young Tape. Now, D. C. does not like Tape; while *I* positively think the creature well enough.”

“ Was there any thing in the story of Miss Brown and him?” at last edged in Tommy.

“ What Miss Brown?” thought Miss Brown; and she almost obliged the young gentlemen to pass, in her desire to bring them up a little closer

to the scratch, for she was not altogether unconnected with the diet as it was.

“Any thing in it? O, horrid shrieks! All the town were only talking of it. Why, Sir, this same ‘Tape of all’ had a chequered destiny,—shyed by the men, caressed by the women—rejected by the father, and accepted by the girl. And then, as somebody said who kept a shop, ‘who is the Duke of Buccleuch?’ a person the other night, at the play, actually asked me who Colonel Brown was? ‘Why, Ma’am, said I, I take him to be a soldier and an officer; and, if I am rightly informed, nephew to the late Sir Thomas Brown.’ ‘And pray who,’ said the woman again, ‘is Sir Thomas Brown?’ Upon which, you know, I quitted my seat, for it was impossible for me to describe Adam.”

“Was Adam, our beloved, at the play, then?”

“No; nor Samuel, our much esteemed; nor wild Isaac either.”

“Ha! ha! ha! So you really thought me in earnest, Chitter?”

“Nay, Tommy, thou bamboozlest thy young

self. I *took*; but I wished to take a companion along with me,—an incredulous fool, for instance, like the one I have now got beside me.”

“ Sir ! Do you mean to insult ”——

“ Not at all, Tommy ; not at all. But, as I was saying to you about these Brownies, it was the highest farce in the world, and, as I said, every body was talking of it.”

“ Miss Brown, I am told, never goes to parties,” returned Tommy, who had no wish for a duel ; and who could almost perceive a similar disinclination in the pale lips of his friend Ned Chitterchat, notwithstanding his bombast.

“ Ah ! there’s a great deal more in that than you would suppose, Tommy. She can dine it, but not ball it.”

“ Religious, or, as some sedates would call it, *serious*, perhaps ? ”

“ No, no, no, no, no. The girl’s as lame as Sister-to-fowling.”

Here Miss Brown, the subject, involuntarily made an exclamation.

“ Yes, yes : You may well cry lame, Tom-

my—will die an old maid, Tommy. And then Markeild's unhatched chickens will get the siller, eh !”

“ But is that girl, Brown, really considered rich ?” quoth Tommy.

“ O yes, must be, must be. Have got their own horses. Keep thirty servants. Eat off silver, and burn nightly forty pounds of wax. The Colonel, too, gives good wine, and the Miss *sits* at these fine *fêtes* :—Good policy that, methinks. But stay, come in here, Tommy, till I get me a pair of slim kid whites ; for I intend, as usual, to do the genteel at the Marchmonts to-night.”

Miss Brown continued to cut her friends and acquaintances, now, without knowing it, and without really observing their approach. She was swallowed up in one grand reflection, full of wonder, amazement, and resentment, at the apparently popular misconstruction put upon all her endeavours to imitate the great Aloofs. She recollected, too, in the moment of confusion, having sent word, some four weeks ago, as an excuse to somebody or other, that she was lame

from a sprain. The lie was now repeated to her cost. She was, however, compelled to forego that, and similar causes of excitation, to listen to the voice of her companion, who had continued so obligingly passive.

"How slow we are going, my dear," she observed. "I declare you seem as breathless nearly as myself. Now, I am fully ten years older than you, I should think."

"Fully?"

"Yes, fully; at the least, I dare say, twelve years older."

"Four-and-twenty, you mean." But Miss Brown merely lisped the number, and Mrs Jacobson heard only a sound that resembled fourteen.

"My dear," she said, and she gently pressed the young lady's arm; "you have really guessed it. But you must understand, I do not wish it to be known. Ladies at my age *require* to be called young, and to be about three-and-thirty does not seem so very awful, especially when we know so many girls whom four or five years more will bring up to the same height."

"This is the Dowager Lady Lochend's door," said Miss Brown; and she complimented both the door and her candid friend Mrs Jacobson with a yawn of almost unmatchable duration.

The Dowager Lady Lochend was at home. But the conversation, though sufficiently innocent and well-conducted, was not altogether very interesting. Her Ladyship complained of labouring under a bad cold; Mrs General Jacobson had just got one; and Miss Brown had but very lately recovered from a third. The two visitors left, to adjourn to another dowager's, to talk over a few more bad colds; but Miss Brown changed her mind on reaching the pavé. She prevailed on her companion to repossess the Bridges with her, however, and hinted more than once that she had no objections to return home by herself.

"Should we not have stopped at B——'s to have looked at that blond?" said Mrs Jacobson, after they had just passed that gentleman's warehouse.

"O dear, so we should. But, pray, don't go back. I fear papa is waiting on that book

that I so stupidly put past amongst my things; and, then, military men have so little, so *very* little patience. But your own old General must have informed you of *this* before."

"Well, I won't insist, my dear. And now, since we have got so far, do you think you can get down by yourself."

"O, with the greatest ease imaginable; so good bye—good bye—I shall call for you to-morrow;" and so saying, Miss Brown forthwith made the best of her way back to —— Place. She had something on her mind of which she wished herself almost immediately disburdened. She had unexpectedly encountered, at least she had a shrewd suspicion that she had encountered, Mr Edward Chitterchat, so notorious for retailing and relating all and every the events of the day, slap-dash as they occurred, and insignificant as was sometimes their complexion; and she would go and dispel all those idle aspersions that had been so industriously and perseveringly heaped upon herself. The Marchmonts, amongst the rest, had given up sending her invitations; had even deferred to

return her pompous morning call; but to the Marchmonts she would go. That man of small-talk, too, Mr Chitterchat, would be there, and she should send him next morning through the town to relate a series of still more wonderful and extraordinary adventures. In her newly-awakened desire to profit by the virtues of a reaction, she ordered out the *materiel* for note-writing, and then composed the following billet for Miss Grace Marchmont:—

“MY DEAR GRACE,—Papa has heard so much lately of a certain song, which it seems you sing *most beautifully*, that he has deputed me to request you to come and spend this evening with us. Now, as we are to be quite alone, and entirely disengaged, there will be no occasion for you to dress, and you can get home as early as you choose. Yours, my dear Grace, very truly,

CECILIA A. BROWN.

P. S.—Pray send over your music before you.

C. B.”

“That will do,” said Miss Brown to herself, as she folded the note carefully up; “and yet it

may chance to misgive. My best plan, therefore, will be to carry it myself, under pretence of the shortness of the invitation." And on this errand she accordingly set out.

She was told that Miss Grace Marchmont was, like many other housekeepers, not at home.

"Preparing for the fatigues of the evening, I presume," said Miss Brown, unriddling her very fine cambric handkerchief. "Pray give her this card, and say that it is Miss Brown—Miss Brown, —— Place, who has called. I shall wait here for half a moment, until I know that Miss Marchmont has got my message."

The footman saw that he was understood—carried up the card as he was desired—and the next moment returned to do the lady herself a similar favour.

"My dear Miss Brown, this is such an agreeable surprise! I have just glanced over your pretty card—But, pray, come to our party to-night, if you are disengaged."

"Why, I daresay you are going to have a ball? I wonder how the man should have let me up."

"O dear, why not? But you are coming, are you not?"

"O, I should be delighted. But, you see, papa would be my death if I were to think of it. It's he, you must know, that won't allow me to visit any where at night."

"What a pity! And this is such a bad foggy afternoon, too."

"O, my dear, this is the best night in the world. In fact, papa was just saying to-day, that he thought he might venture to let me out if the weather should continue this way, and you should happen to be engaged."

"What! this damp raw fog?"

"I grant it is shocking; and yet he says it's all very seasonable. But I must go.—By the bye," she added, pausing suddenly on the stairs, "if your mother should take it into her head to send me a card, I think I might get him coaxed into it, after all. You know how much I am condemned to suffer from his whims sometimes."

"Well, good bye: I shall fill up a card for you immediately. But won't you see mamma?"

"My dear, I have not a moment to lose. So good bye—good bye. I dare say it *has* come on a little thick."

Before the door had finally closed upon this after-speech of Miss Brown's, Miss Grace Marchmont had already communicated the result of her visit to her mother.

"He is such an artful man that Colonel Brown!" said Mrs Marchmont. "Though I confess I consider the daughter to be the worse of the two"——

She paused, however, to consider the éclat of having so very fastidious a young lady once more on a visiting footing at the house; and eventually permitted her daughter Grace to write the very pressing invite, for which, in addition to the card of ceremony, Miss Brown herself had just given the hint.

The following card, carefully written and sealed, and having for a motto a piece of ivy twined round an oak, with the words encircling, "*Where I place my affections, I die,*" was received in answer.

"Miss Brown regrets she cannot have the

honour of waiting on Mrs and the Misses Marchmont this evening."

" ——— Place, Friday."

The young lady, on whom the events of the morning were now beginning to lose their effect, had changed her mind, and that upon the unexpected arrival of a still more tremendous-sized ticket from the true object of her admiration and idolatry—Lady Aloof.

" Lady Aloof—a party—'Tuesday the 29th—half-past nine o'clock." Lady Aloof was partial to early hours.

To display this same card upon her sofa-table was to Miss Brown a sufficient consolation for almost every other affliction; and, perhaps, a slight indistinct feeling of satisfaction at having, as it were, mortified the Marchmonts, was not unmingled with her happiness upon the occasion.

CHAPTER XII.

"There is no snare more dangerous to busy and excursive minds, than the cobwebs of petty inquisitiveness, which entangle them in trivial employments and minute studies, and detain them in a middle state between the tediousness of total inactivity and the fatigue of laborious efforts ; enchant them at once with ease and novelty, and vitiate them with the luxury of learning."

RAMBLER.

LADY ALOOF's card and dancing assembly was very brilliant. Young ladies came there who had never been introduced to the family before. The gentlemen were supported by a *squadron* of splendidly dressed dragoons ; and there was a vast display of dowagers and old maids, set off by a few Lords of the Restoration, several high personages of official importance, and a volatile group of wits, lawyers, professors, and *litterati*.

Miss Brown, through some accident or another, did not dance so much as on this stage she had intended ; but she exerted herself pretty successfully in recommending herself to the young ladies of the family, whom she had found it so very difficult hitherto to approach ; while the young ladies aforesaid, as sincere as herself, endeavoured to render themselves for once both accessible and polite.

Next day Miss Brown handed in her card from her carriage ; and in a fortnight afterwards she was visited in return by Miss Lætitia Alicia Aloof in person.

Miss Lætitia Alicia Aloof was rather a little more distant in her address this time than she had proved herself on the assembly night, and seemed, throughout her short visit, to be constantly afraid of saying any thing that could afterwards be repeated as hers, or of doing any thing that ran a risk of ever again being remembered as coming from an Aloof. Still and on she had come—she had called ; and Miss Brown was left more than ever inclined to tyrannize over the residue of her acquaintances. Mrs

Fife, too, was fortunately laid up with her annual cough ; and Miss Brown had nobody else in her vicinity who was inclined to pry into the true motives of her undertakings. To the Aloof family, therefore, every body was to be, and every body was to *know* themselves to be, sacrificed.

In return for a glass of calf's jelly, a little weak negus, a tea-spoonful of eau-sucré, half an orange, and a halfpenny sized piece of rout-cake, demolished by his daughter at the party of the Viscountess Aloof, Colonel Brown, with great joy, prepared to give a dinner-feed, at which the fish and soups alone were calculated to cost twenty pounds. This gentleman, however, was not by any means what is generally termed an extravagant person ; he had only that small affair the *purse*, and the vanity to display it upon an occasional grand occasion. His catacombs, on this precious day, disgorged all that can be named as excellent or *recherché* ; and even the house in Fife, that quiet rival to the notorious Fife-hall, was made to deliver up a *quantum* of old Hock, such as had rarely been

seen, and was not very likely to be seen again. Upon the less important parts of the banquet, Miss Brown and her housekeeper were allowed to give their *veto*. The company invited, we presume, were all in corresponding keeping.

At six o'clock the roll of carriages, in a certain direction, began to be defined by the quick set ears of Miss Brown, and in half an hour afterwards every body was come but the Right Honourable family of the Aloofs.

"Every body at least will hear them announced," said Miss Brown to herself as seven o'clock sounded through the house, when, at that moment, the important carriage arrived. The setting down, the steps being soft and capacious, made little noise, but the shutting up made a sort of rattle; and Miss Brown began to wonder how, had Lady Aloof and her daughters been to descend from their coach, the footman could have so very rapidly set 'all right.' Her newly awakened suspicion was confirmed. Lord Aloof entered alone; and not only that, but evidently out of humour, and seemingly regretting the not having honoured some other place of

distinction with his presence: While, as if to follow up this blow, almost at the same moment was presented a card of apology, which had, through some mischance or other, lain unnoticed in the hall for the last half hour. It was from the Lady Aloof, and stated, "that the effects of a bad cold, &c. must deprive her of the honour of waiting upon Colonel and Miss Brown at dinner that day," &c. Lord Aloof was left to explain how the Misses Aloof had found it impossible to leave their mamma.

Miss Brown's total want of sensibility was of use to her, it must be acknowledged, in this very mortifying predicament; and she was able even to lament, with well-bred reserve, the occasion of Lady Aloof and her daughters' absence. Her father was not so easily consoled. He reflected, probably, on his own great personal trouble and expense, and in particular on the insult that had been so very openly offered to his pride; but still anxious to appear on "good terms" with the absenting Aloofs, he contrived, like his daughter, to disguise his sense of the implied affront.

"We have passed but a dull day, I'm afraid," he observed, looking round upon a couple of large empty drawing-rooms, in which might be perceived recent traces of an effort to please *somebody* of caste.

"Well, I like quiet parties best, papa."

"So do I, my dear," returned her father, sighing rather a little profoundly, however. "But, to say the truth, Cecilia, every thing went very heavily on. My Lord Aloof, too, went very soon away."

"That was to be expected," said the young lady somewhat doggedly. "But, if I mistake not, you were all very merry down stairs. Lord Aloof told me himself, that he had never spent a more social half-hour; and then he was so happy to meet with his old friend Colonel Cab."

"His Lordship certainly got a *little* more facetious. But I"—was miserable, he would have said; but the out-and-out confession he apprehended to be a *little* too indigestible both for his daughter and himself.

"O yes, I know you were not happy; and it is not people's fortune to get any thing better

than trouble, I believe, upon such occasions. Only, for a *first* visit, to have had Viscount Aloof was, to me, much more than could have been, rationally speaking, expected.—We all know, papa, that there never was a family who adhered so strictly to their own motto.”

“Very true, my dear: I must acknowledge I have often heard that. But what was it again?”

“O, don’t you recollect?—I KEEP ALOOF.”

“And so it is! How stupid that I should have forgot it. Ha! ha! ha!” and the gentleman indulged himself in the relaxatory *succedaneum* of a half laugh. “But, my love, won’t you order some of these immense lights to be put out; otherwise, I think, we too must keep aloof.”

“By all means, papa. But won’t you play me one game at chess?”

“By all means, Cecilia.—And now, upon which side of the table-board do you think you should like to sit?”

“I think, where I am. Only you must set the fire-screen a little nearer me—ay, that will do. I suppose I take the first move?”

Colonel Brown moved his lips. He was anxious to please and to exalt her in every thing, but he was just thinking what a failure his elaborate dinner had turned out. The young lady thought differently: she guessed that the report, at least, would do *something* in her favour with the Alqofs; and likewise hoped that, through the good opinion of the Lord, she should next arrive at the good graces of the Lady.

Such keen cogitations as these were rather incompatible with the attention that was due to a well-managed game at chess. Miss Brown had contrived that the grand lights should burn a little longer; and as her father became sleepy and abstracted, she suffered her fair hand to overturn, with a languid motion, the remaining castles, knights, and bishops, that attended upon the fine elephant-mounted kings and queens of Colonel Brown's very superb Indian set.

Her father yawned for a moment over this agreeable revolution, and then ringing for his valet, prepared to repose his now conglomerated faculties on the gentle pillows of a down-bed.

There was another personage, however, who,

though she appeared also to lay quiet, was nevertheless not to be so easily set at rest.

“ Who was that? who was that? who was that?” demanded Mrs Fife, as her door closed upon a tiny ring and a puny voice.

“ It was nobody, Mem.”

“ Nobody !!! I think I never heard the like of that before ! Nobody !!!”

“ It was only Miss M‘Tavish,” said the footman speaking along with her ; “ and she left no name.”

“ No name !!!”

The footman stared.

“ What ! is M‘Tavish not a name ?—Fly this instant, you young villain you, and bring her back.”

Miss M‘Tavish, we may take the opportunity to observe, was a very respectable retired dress-maker, whom a legacy left by a careful aunt had at length helped to establish in a kind of half and half sort of independence. Besides this pseudo merit, Miss M‘Tavish was one of those convenient sort of persons, who, having heard that necessity was the mother of invention,

can, when at a loss for legitimate news, invent them,—one whose love of gossip, and re-titled tittle-tattle, was not to be in the least endangered by any extra fatigue or over exertion. In a word, she was not one of Charles the Second's, but one of Mrs Fife's Tame Knaves, and had accordingly at all times the privilege of the entrée, when not, it should be observed, in the vicinity of Fife-hall. Miss M'Tavish, however, had sufficient tact to know her place, and also to know at what times it was expected she should appear in it. To come and sit awhile after tea, when Mrs Fife was known to be disengaged; or in the morning, before any other more consequential visitor might be expected, was her favourite practice; and sometimes it was her custom, by way of jubilee, to act the useful part of an accomplished sick-nurse. On the present occasion she had called because the day was too wet to allow that favour from any one else,—which shews, we opine, the advantage of young women being compelled into hardihood at a very early period of life.

“ I would give any thing to know what made

them send you away, Miss M'Tavish," said the lady, as her reporter entered the room, behind the Venetian window-blinds of which Mrs Fife, maugre her annual cold, was frequently accustomed to watch.—"I really should like you to help me to guess his motive for such a strange—shut the door, John, I have got something particular to say to Miss M'Tavish—piece of conduct. But I know that he would only puzzle me if I were to ask. But what's the news? what's the news, Miss M'Tavish?"

Miss M'Tavish took off her bonnet, the strings of which came rather too much in contact with that vehicle of all oracular communications yclep'd the throat, and prepared for action.

"Well, what news?" encored Mrs Fife, as she sat impatiently watching her motions, and occasionally darted her eyes through the slits of the Venetians upon some poor umbrella'd pedestrian or other.

"Lord Aloof—!!" cried Miss M'Tavish, as if she had been addressing a deaf person; "Lord Aloof has been—where now, Mrs Fife, do you think?"

Mrs Fife answered by turning upon her a fixed and feverish gaze. The game had been started; and who could be more eager than Curiosity, in the hands of Mrs Fife, in the pursuit? "*Where?*" she at last pronounced, as if inquiring for the further destinies of the dead.

"Well, then," responded Miss M'Tavish, "the great man has been to your friends the Browns, at last."

"No!" said Mrs Fife in a whisper, hollow, deep, and sepulchral.

"A fact."

"Mercy on us!"

"And more than that, Ma'am," eagerly continued Miss M'Tavish, who was now likewise beginning to get a little warm upon the subject, "it was said that *Lady Aloof*—only conceive!—and her daughters were to have been there also, had not something extraordinary interfered to prevent them.—You heard that Cecilia Brown was at their grand party, I suppose?"

"Heard!" shrieked Mrs Fife, "I have heard nothing—for the last three weeks; for Sophia Leslie, poor good-natured thing, has never any

thing to say that refers to any thing but myself."

"But then, consider, you have been so very ill, my dear Mrs Fife; and then, as Miss Leslie says, you will always think so little of yourself."

"That's very true.—But stop! wasn't that my housekeeper, with her cadie at her back, that I got a glimpse of just now?"

"It *was* her, I rather think."

"Are you sure?"

"I saw them both, I think, go 'down the steps."

"I saw somebody," said Mrs Fife.—"And you are come to stay dinner with me, I *know*, Miss M'Tavish?"

"Well, Ma'am, I *am*," boldly asserted Miss M'Tavish, who saw all that was wanted by this remark.

"Well, then, let's hear about the Browns and their party.—I perceive it was a party," continued Mrs Fife, reseating herself. "I always told you that that man Brown was as close as an oyster. And, no doubt, this intimacy with the Aloofs has been a-hatching for

the last twelve months at least. Pray, what had they all to dine upon?"

"*Every* thing. There never was such a display. For one thing—the Colonel bought for that same day two hundred and fifty pounds worth of silver plate."

"Perhaps the things were plated," observed Mrs Fife.

"Very possibly. But their housekeeper, who is half-sister to my uncle, informed me for a fact, that every thing had the proper stamp."

"But I have found out many imitations that have the proper stamp, Miss M'Tavish; or at least something very like it. But, pray, who composed the party?"

"Well, I must tell you."

"Was you desired *not* to tell me?"

"O, no, no, no. I am quite delighted to get any thing to tell."

"Miss M'Tavish, you are digressing. You promised to let me hear who were all at the Browns to meet the Aloofs."

"O, well, well, well, Ma'am. There was Sir James and Lady Methodical—Mr and Mrs

Horn Regular—Mr and the Misses Gander—a Colonel Cab”——

“ A what?—a Crab?”

“ A Colonel Cab, and two West India medical students.”

“ So, so, so, so ! Lady Methodical and Mrs Horn Regular ! Pray, what did these amiable ladies wear, let me ask?”

“ They were in blacks.”

“ Blacks !!!——But who is it that’s dead, do you know?”

“ The much-beloved Duke of York.”

“ O, yes, yes. But we have had enough of the much-beloved Duke of York. And now, my good Miss M‘Tavish, I should just like to know something—in a quiet way—about these *Ganders*.”

Miss M‘Tavish shook her head.

“ Hab !” and Mrs Fife appeared to sink under the excess of her expectations.

“ Hem”——

“ Wait just one moment, my dear Miss M‘Tavish : You must have a glass of wine. Here,”

she added, darting back with bottle and glass in hand, "drink that."

"No more, my dear Mrs Fife."

"Just one other single glass. You know I dare not taste it for my cold."

"How distressing!"

"Yes, very distressing. But quick, my dear Miss M'Tavish; I am so anxious to hear all about the Ganders."

"But, is the door close, Mrs Fife?"

Mrs Fife took the hint, and added a little stubborn ornamental bolt to the ordinary *quantum* of fastening. "Quite fast, and now you may begin at the very foundation."

"Well, then, the fellow's father sold beef-steaks at Newcastle."

"Miss M'Ta——vish!!!"

"A fact; old Mr Stevenson, the hair-dresser, minds perfectly well of being in his shop."

"Gracious! But pray get on, my dear."

"Well, the son—the present Mr Gander—it seems, was a most uncommon wild boy; and so the father, to get quit of him, sent him abroad;

and, they say, it never cost the poor man a far-thing."

"But how could he manage that?"

"By buying cattle, it seems, from Lord — ; at least so I heard it. Well, it seems the lad made a great deal of money; and married, and got a great deal more—married to *oblige* somebody."

"O-ho ! Just so."

"But they say he has left his wife behind him, for fear, as it is said, some other body should own her. Now, do you understand *that*?"

"*Perfectly!*" shouted Mrs Fife.

"But the cream of the story, Ma'am, is this; that when I was standing, about a week ago, in the Miss Dresswell's front room, telling them this very same story, a coach I had never seen before came thundering up; and out of it—came the very man himself, followed by his four half-black daughters!"

"And what were they like?"

"The eldest I would call like Impudence, and the rest like their sister. But who in the

world's that stopping next door? Well, may I be confounded if it is not the very folk we were talking about!"

"What! the Ganders?"

"The Ganders!"

"Ring the bell for my shawl and hat, Miss M'Tavish. I have not seen the people next door for a month. You'll come with me, Miss M'Tavish?"

"I suppose that old girning devil, Mr Crimpfit, is married by this time," answered Miss M'Tavish, also adjusting her bonnet.

"Going to be married, is he? But when heard you the report?"

"The Ganders are *always* on the move, my dear Mrs Fife."

"O, come then, let's fly. Here, Willie, throw over me my old plaid shawl; and tell Miss Leslie I shall be back in an instant. And d'ye hear, Willie, be more attentive than ever in watching Mr Crimpfit's door. Miss M'Tavish has just heard a report that he is going to be" —

—"Buried—my dear Mrs Fife; I meant buried.—Shall I tap?"

"Ay, do.—Well, John, I suppose Mr and Miss Crimpfit are at home?—What! won't you let us pass?"

"They are at home this morning, Ma'am; but"——

"But what, John?"

"The family are engaged."

"O, I know that, John—with Mr and the Misses Gander; people I know intimately."

"But they are all *particularly* engaged, Ma'am." And John strained his neck to ascertain whether a certain hackney-coach might, or might not, be within sight yet.

"Mr Crimpfit is making his Will," whispered Miss M'Tavish.

"Is Mr Crimpfit making his Will, John?" demanded Mrs Fife. John smiled.

"I told you so," cried Miss M'Tavish; "and, perhaps, between you and I, the Ganders have their good reasons for being present.—Perhaps every one of them are the man's daughters."

“ They are coming at last,” said John ; and he made a motion as if he intended to clear the way *per force*.

“ We shall stay here till that coach comes up, at any rate,” said Miss M‘Tavish, who had her eyes upon the still more perplexed ones of Mrs Fife. But at that moment a servant girl came to say, that it was impossible for Mr or Miss Crimpfit that day to be seen ; an intimation by which it was desired that the intruders should find themselves dismissed, and so disperse without further parley or delay.

Mrs Fife was not, however, to be so easily or so quickly dislodged from her position. “ Come here, John,” she whispered emphatically, and closing the inner door of the salon, so as to divide him from the party who had last arrived to his assistance. “ Now, look you, here is the five shillings I promised you for lending me—you understand—the umbrella on that wet Sunday when it rained so fast.—Now,” she added, reducing her voice so as even to be inaudible to her double, Miss M‘Tavish,—“ tell me what it is that is going on in that house ?”

“ My master’s marriage with the eldest Miss Gander.”

“ Your master’s marriage with the eldest Miss Gander !!!” repeated Mrs Fife staggering, as if she had been shot.

“ Yes, yes, Ma’am.—But, for God’s sake, retire: They are coming; and I shall lose my place.”

“ Who, who are coming ?”

“ The relations, Ma’am, the relations.”

“ And is the clergyman come ?”—

The door was closed upon this query, and opened again to a hackney-coach full of Mr and Miss Crimpfit’s relations, in whose white and lengthened looks might be discovered every thing but joy or congratulation. At least, such was the report of Mrs Fife and her companion, as they stood upon their own steps to examine each creature as it sprung fearfully through the rain; to the dampening attacks of which, however, its diligent examiners appeared to be wholly insensible.

By this time Miss Leslie had finished that employment, which the curiosity of her friend

Mrs Fife had prevented from undertaking herself; and she had just re-approached the drawing-room door, when her senses, as well as her steps, were arrested by a couple of active female voices in full play. "Clack! clack! clack! clack! clack!" Miss Leslie could not distinguish whether queries, rejoinders, interjections or conjunctions prevailed. It seemed a concentrated Babel, which no human ingenuity was calculated to detect or to understand.

"Clack! clack! clack! clack! clack!" and Miss Leslie took to flight.

Miss M'Tavish was obliged to follow her example.—Mrs Fife's cold had taken a turn decidedly and dangerously feverish, supposed to have been occasioned by too great anxiety in discussing the merits of Mr Crimpfit's hasty marriage; and from too much fatigue in watching the final departure of the amiable friends of the interesting bride. Be this as it may, a physician was required to be sent for; and Miss M'Tavish was politely dismissed, with an injunction, however, to return upon some early day—A proof that there exists in active minds a principle

capable of producing a sufficiency of bustle and disturbance even out of the worst of all materials—a political marriage and a wet day.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Curiosity is the thirst of the soul; it inflames and torments us, and makes us taste every thing with joy, however otherwise insipid, by which it may be quenched."

RAMBLER.

"AM I any better, think you, my dear Miss Leslie?"

"Well, then, my dear Mrs Fife, I rather suspect you are not."

"Shall I tell you what is to do me good?"

"If you please."

"Just another visit from my friend Miss M'Tavish."

"From Miss M'Tavish, Ma'am!"

"From Miss M'Tavish. She is the only person that understands my complaint, and she generally carries all the ingredients of cure along with her."

"Well, I should be apt to suspect Miss M'Tavish's skill in pharmacy, my dear Mrs Fife. But, as we are told of the Highland traditionary charms, the virtue sometimes lies in the mere belief."

"Pray, what's the clock?" demanded Mrs Fife.

"It is just five minutes to four."

"Then what in the wide world can be keeping Eliza M'Tavish?"

"She *might* have been here by this time."

"Might have been here by this time! But stay, hark! wasn't that a noise? Do, my dear, go and inquire who it is. Yet stay, wait; let me listen. Don't you think it is somebody coming up stairs?"

"I almost think so, my dear Mrs Fife."

"If it be her, I should guess her to have got more than one pair of feet."

"Perhaps I had better inquire."

"Don't stir, for mercy's sake!"

Miss Leslie stood on tiptoe, while the door below gave a long shriek.

"Bless me! how that drawing-room door

does squeak. Do you know when the hinges were last oiled?—Well, Anne, whom have we got down stairs, eh?”

Mrs Fife had got Mrs Dudd, Miss Kicklecackle, and Mr Jonathan Hochytoch.

Anne might have added the witch of Endor; for the apparition was equal, to the affrighted senses of Mrs Fife.

“And so, this is the promised bunch of curiosities which, when dead, I am to have stuffed into mummies and placed in M^r Farlane’s repository! And in exchange for whom I have promised to invite, call upon, and receive that young lady, Miss Edmonstone. Upon my word, you are a pretty contriver, friend Madrake!”

“My dear Mrs Fife, didn’t you talk whole days together about these people to Mr Madrake, and also insisted upon getting acquainted with the very young lady you have just mentioned?”

“My dear girl, Mr Crimpfit’s marriage, and Colonel Brown’s intrigues, had put every thing

out of my head. But go your ways, Anne; I shall look at these wonders presently."

"My dear Mrs Fife, you surely don't intend to leave your own apartment?"

"My dear, I never felt so well in my life. Miss M'Tavish completely revived me yesterday; and now to think that I have at last got those Dudds—those travelling punchinellos—in my power, has entirely restored me. And, by the bye, as you speak of returning to your grand-aunt next week, I think I shall go and look after certain folks, who, if they are not to be found in the World's-end Close, are not very far from the world's end itself." And Mrs Fife, having Miss Leslie's assistance, now descended in a bustle of impatience to the spirits below.

No longer dark, mysterious, and impenetrable, the Dudd faction were come, under Madrake's all-delirious tutelage, not only to answer frankly, and at once, the quick shot artillery of Mrs Fife's inquiries, but to suggest intelligence at such points as had not yet had the advantage of being penetrated by that lady's activity. Mrs Dudd and her party were come to thank Mrs

Fife for her former civility; to express themselves charmed with the wonders of Fife-hall, and the M'Farlane repository; and to acknowledge, that the former lady had the honour of rearing in her home the two transplanted, yet flourishing shoots, Messieurs Vonpepper and M'Ginger, whose friends and fathers had been known to the late Mr M'Farlane, but who, through some unaccountable instinct or other, had hitherto contrived to elude the persevering vigilance of Mrs Fife.

Mrs Dudd, it is true, had nearly fallen several times asleep during so terrible an exertion of turbulence and fatigue; but she had a powerful auxiliary in the laughing tattle of Miss Kicklecackle, who amply regaled their indefatigable inquisitor with every *item* and atom connected with, or relating to, the combustible lives of the two spices, M'Ginger and Vonpepper; seconded in turn by an occasional grumph from Mr Hochytoch. In fine, Mrs Fife for once felt herself satisfied, and suffered the parties to depart without expressing any further inclination to see or hear of them again.

To analyze this grand transaction, Mr Madrake had, while on a visit to his very inflammable friends Vonpepper and M'Ginger, described Mrs Fife herself as a curiosity well worth Miss Kicklecackle's reperusal. Mr Dudd had expressed himself, for the time, desirous of cultivating patronage for the sake of extending the boarding system; while Madrake had had the dexterity likewise to inveigle Mr Hochytoch; and the parts, so distributed, had forthwith been performed, agreeably to the hints above delivered.

The following acknowledgment of Mrs Fife's satisfaction and content reached Madrake next morning.

"Mrs Fife's compliments to Mr Madrake. Had no idea that his long promised lions should have turned out so very agreeable; and that, instead of *indescribables*, she has seldom had the satisfaction of meeting more intelligible or agreeable people.

"Mrs Fife begs leave to add, that she not only feels a desire, but a *very great* desire, to see Mr Madrake's friends (the Edmonstones), and

thinks she will be able to accompany him there some morning next week—Miss Leslie's departure yesterday for Fife, and a number of rather imperative engagements both at home and abroad, preventing her from fixing upon an earlier date.

“ A——y Street,
Wednesday.”

“ You will take and deliver this card to Mr Madrake, John, and see if possible to get it put safe into his own hands. I have no other message, except that I wish you to call and inquire for Mrs Marchmont; to get me the first and last volumes of the three last novels, and the last number of the Magazine. You will also come home by Lady Methodical's, and endeavour to find out who are to dine there, and whether Miss Methodical's ring has been found yet.—By the bye, didn't you wait table there last Tuesday?”

“ And it was a sad day that, Mem.”

“ Ay,—all the servants at two o'clock drank white brandy instead of table beer.—I can

scarcely believe altogether in the *accident* of the thing, John."

"Weel, Mem, we'll no just say owre muckle about that; or, as Bailie Nicol Jarvie would say, 'we'll let *that* flee stick to the wa'."

"But, by the bye, John, I don't recollect whether or not I happened to ask you who were all there."

"There was a fine company, Mem."

"But, John, who were they? who were they?"

"There were five officers of the — Highlanders, and five of the — Dragoons, Mr Horn Regular, and—— and a gentleman I canna recollect."

"Was it Colonel Brown of Bertie?"

"N—no. I canna exactly—that is, I dinna exactly recollect."

"Was it any of the Master Hyndfords? Now answer me at once."

"No."

"Mr Aloof?"

"No."

"Lord Aloof?"

“ No.”

“ Charles Suttie?”

“ No.”

“ Sir George Terrorfield?”

“ That was something like it, Mem.

“ Colonel Akenside?”

“ No.”

“ Mr Madrake?”

“ O, you know he’s a kenn’d man, Mr Madrake, Mem.”

“ John, you must not stir till you have told me. Or stay, could you not make some of the Methodicals remember about it? They were surely not just so tipsy as all that, were they?”

“ They were past speaking, Mem—(which I wish were the case with somebody else.)”

“ Well, well, John, get you gone; and recollect, Mr Madrake first; and, John, you must just run up the length of St David’s-street, and give my compliments to Miss M’Tavish, and say that I expect her to take an early dinner with me to-day, at a quarter past four o’clock.”

“ I have taken a notion, in the midst of all my difficulties, to go back *yonder*,” resumed

Mrs Fife, as that lady, true to her call, came in: "The people, you know, that I went to see the winter before last.—But have you got any thing to say? any thing to tell, Miss M'Tavish?"

Miss M'Tavish held her peace. She was fraught with a wonderful world of intelligence, but the fearful annunciation of their visit to the mysterious quarter sealed her lips.

"I just thought, in the bustle I was in, I should never get it over," continued Mrs Fife, seating herself gravely at rather a scanty board. "But why won't you sit down? The truth is, you and I can dine upon any thing, Miss M'Tavish; and Mrs Gregory had no idea that I should have any body with me to-day."

Miss M'Tavish looked rather bleak upon the back of this information.

"But we shall have plenty of wine and water when we come back,—if the filthy air of these places does not choke us on the road; and this drop good Madeira in the mean time.—You may leave the room, Willie."

The two ladies sat munching their curry'd

scraps in fearful silence, as if brooding over the performance of some desperate orgies, which an inevitable fate was now calling them to fulfil. At last Mrs Fife rose, and caught the bell-rope in her hand. She paused, however, upon this feat ; and as she stood with her sharp eyes fixed upon the dull gloom of Miss M'Tavish's goggles, she seemed to revolve, like Carathis, some deep important purpose.

"It will do no harm," she muttered at length ; and giving the cord the fatal impulse, she stole softly back to her chair.

"Bring out that Dutch cordial, Willie, and another couple of glasses ; and you can take away after Miss M'Tavish and I are gone."

"Perhaps, Ma'am, you will require the carriage then ?" observed her other valet, who had frequently experienced in his own person the inconvenience of not being told of all that was wanted beforehand.

"Carriage, John !" returned his mistress, plaintively. "No, no, John ; we shall want no carriages. Our business is by much too important to be mixed up with parade.—And now

have done, if you please—Miss M'Tavish and I do not very much interest ourselves about smart polished tables."

The two ladies now sat looking at each other in dumb dejection. At length Mrs Fife gave the signal to march.

"Get on your mantle, if you please, Miss M'Tavish;—and now be so good as help me on with mine: any thing will do on this occasion. Stay, I think we may as well allow ourselves just one little glass more of this Dutch stuff, if it were only to keep the cold from our feet; for really that old Madeira we had at dinner did not seem to me to have any taste—Are you partial to cordials?"

Miss M'Tavish replied by a most unspellable word of assent; with which, however, we dare say, the least *recherché* of our readers are more or less acquainted.

"Good for the constitution, don't you think? but don't say you a word more, for we must go;"—and stealing softly along the lobby, and leaving lights to burn during their absence, the pair—and sure such a pair was never seen—

set out, like another Aladdin and his mother in search of the wonderful lamp.

They continued to walk pretty steadily forward, stealing, however, an occasional elf-look at all that was going on, with an incidental peep into the different carriages as they drove past, till they arrived at a slippery lane communicating between the Lawnmarket and the Earthen Mound, when both paused to take breath.

“ Oh ! this is awful, Miss M‘Tavish ! and such a place ! I wonder we are not assassinated.”

“ Assassinated, Mrs Fife ! Dear me, I think nothing of this ; and let me tell you, much better folks than we have both lived and died in it.”

“ Yes, Miss M‘Tavish, they have *died* in it. Your father, I suppose, honest man, never lived to see the New Town ?”

“ No, he never lived to *come* to the New Town ; but he lived till he was ninety-six.”

“ And your mother, what age was she when she died ?—Hah ! now I breathe the air again. But where are all the pye-men, with their bells,

I used to see on this street long ago? I think there was something very cheerful in that."

"All abolished," said Miss M'Tavish, rather tartly replying to the question.

"Frightened away, I suppose, by the gas."

"O, long before that, I fancy. But indeed the gas lights are not so very accommodating for a poor body that wants to get a little business done 'upon the sly,' as my nephew John Tamson says.—But I think this is the foot of the B——, is it not?"

"I suppose so, Miss M'Tavish."

"And we go up that dark stair on the left hand, do we not?"

"Exactly.—Oh! monstrous me! what a climb up!—Pray, how is Mrs Logan?"

"In her ord'nar, Mem: But will ye no stap in?"

Our two adventurers made, however, rather an awkward *stap in*—Mrs Fife having stumbled upon one of those groups of three descending steps, so common to old houses, into a small snug comfortable-looking parlour, where, on each side of the fire-place, sat two aged infirm

women, one of whom seemed to have been struck with palsy, and the other with a general fund of all sorts of diseases and infirmities.

These individuals Mrs Fife now examined with an eager and intense curiosity, which, however, had something of feeling in it; and she was going to take the chair which Miss M'Tavish's politeness now supplied, for the purpose of more calmly observing them, when her attention was directed towards a young man of a very gentle and interesting appearance, who sat buried in apparently profound study over a book.

"Miss M'Tavish," she said in a whisper; "Miss M'Tavish, I would give the world to know what book it is he is reading.—Poor Mrs Logan!" she added, approaching one of the invalids, "you do indeed look very bad."

"Charles," said the sick lady with a feeble effort; "Charles, it is Mrs Fife."

Charles raised his eyes from the book with an expression half-pleased half-vexed. "My dear

Madam, I sincerely beg your pardon. Pray—pray, take a seat.”

“ O yes, I shall take a seat. Miss M‘Tavish, there, has just been handing me one, which of course did not disturb you, after my fall in the passage.—But, pray, don’t inquire about it: It was nothing. And now, pray, how is your mother, and your aunt? and how have you been yourself? and what are Sandy and Willie doing? and what have you been all about?—But you can tell me nothing, I do think.”

“ I intend to tell you every thing, Madam,” replied Mr Charles Logan, “ if you will give me leave,” he added with a smile.

“ But how do you manage them all, I should wish to know?”

“ Well, then, Madam, I take as great care of my mother and her sister as possible: I keep Sandy and Willie still at school; teach them their lessons at night; attend business through the day—In short, Madam, I do the best I can.”

“ Very good, very good. But have you no debt over your head, Charles?”

"None, thank God! none."

"And only seventy pounds a-year?"

"Seventy-five now, Madam."

"Miss M'Tavish, is not all this very odd?—

Well, you are an excellent creature. And to think of you being left, too, with a mother, an aunt, two brothers, and a father to bury.—Poor man! Really, that old gentleman, M'Farlane, might have done something for him; but he had such an antipathy to every thing in the shape of poverty! Was your father very ill pleased with the settlement, I wonder?"

"My father's ill-health, Madam, and heavy misfortunes, left him but little time to think of so distant a connexion."

"Ah, well, I dare say it was better that he did not think. But where's Willie and Sandy all this time? I am told they are two fine looking lads."

"Gone to their arithmetical class, I believe."

"And are they very clever?"

"That is a gift, Madam, not very well understood. But I believe their industry will more than supply the want of brighter talent."

“ I hope it will; for *you* don't intend to keep them up, do you?—But, my dear Miss M'Tavish, pray do not tease Mrs Logan, poor body! with so many questions.—How long have you been ill, Ma'am?”

“ Since my husband's death;—but Charles, there,” and a tear began to glisten—“ Charles, there, would make me well—if any thing could.”

“ Ah, poor body! just so. But, pray, had you a cough when you found yourself first laid up?—I have one every season. Miss M'Tavish, do you think it was very bad this winter?”

“ Indeed, Ma'am, I am sure I scarcely recollect,” answered Miss M'Tavish, in some confusion.

“ What? not recollect! Well, Miss M'Tavish, I should give the world to know what you are dreaming about?”

“ I rather thought it better,” said Miss M'Tavish, hastily repairing her blunder—“ but perhaps you might have found it fully worse.”

“ Did I say that I had found it fully worse, Miss M'Tavish?”

“ Really, Ma'am, I can't say.”

“ Well, well, it does not signify ; you make, at least, a very attentive nurse.—But pray, Mr Logan, what rent do you pay for this house ? ”

“ Fifteen pounds, Ma’am.”

“ Just my footman’s wages ; and they are to be raised next term.—What servants do you keep ?—O, Miss M’Tavish, be so good as look your watch, and tell me what o’clock it is. I never can guess time.”

“ It is half past eight,” ventured Miss M’Tavish, who wearied to get away.

“ Half past eight ! no possible !—Mr Logan, do tell me what it is by your watch ? ”

“ Half past seven, Ma’am ; though I rather suspect Miss M’Tavish to be in the right,” returned Mr Logan ; who had also, it may be supposed, tired of the visit.

“ Then we must go, Miss M’Tavish. Good night to you, Mrs Logan ; and good night to you, Mr Charles.—By the bye, pray mind and keep the two lads at their tasks. In the mean time”——I shall be happy to see you, she would have said, but a principle of prudence restrained her, for fear, as she herself often said, she

should 'draw an old house about her ears;' and she merely added—"Take care of your mother.—But, pray, don't come down to the *very* foot of the steps—So, that'll do—Good night, good night.—Eh, mercy! Miss M'Tavish, how glad am I to have got over that visit! There's no satisfaction to be found yonder. I used to send old Robert Mackay to watch them sometimes; but every night was douce, and every night was alike."

"Well, I daresay it's so much the better for themselves, poor bodies," observed Miss M'Tavish.

"O, I agree with you, I agree with you; but give me your arm, Miss M'Tavish: I never saw the like of this street. Gracious! what a pull!"

"But won't you have a coach when we get to the top, my dear Mrs Fife?"

"O, not for the world. We must just slip quietly home. John has got me Mrs Gregory's key, and nobody's to be any the wiser of this awful tramp."

Mrs Fife, ladies and gentlemen, had just been

to fulfil one of those very painful and harassing duties, called a visit to one's poor relations. Old Mrs Logan and she were cousin's children, though the latter lady wished to have the connexion thought even more distant. Nevertheless Mrs Fife paid her friends the sort of visit we have just described, and there her clan-nish inclinations were supposed to stop. In fact, she believed that any particular attentions she might have shewn them would only have tended to mislead; and, moreover, she was not very much disposed to have her own personal dignity and consequence disturbed, since any little intercourse that had hitherto subsisted between them, had only originated in her desire to know, and to see, what they, as well as the rest of the world, were about.

“ Now we may be comfortable !” she exclaimed, as she threw herself into a chair by the fire, after her weary expedition to the foot of the W—— B——. “ Now, my dear Miss M'Tavish, we may enjoy some rational conversation. It was on my mind that we should find them all like starved wasps, famished to death.”

“ And now, Willie, make haste with the coffee, will you?—Do you like apricot jam, or guava, Miss M'Tavish? But, for any sake, let me hear all about the Browns. That Miss I could never endure since the day I fainted, it seems, is going to be married.”

“ O, it's all settled: I was just dying to tell you: And it's to be on Friday.”

“ On Friday?”

“ On Friday.”

“ And the young gentleman's name—or rather, who, and what is he?”

“ He's a Mr Maringle.

“ And who is Mr Maringle?”

“ The brother of a Baronet, but much richer, they say, as he inherits all the mother's money. In fact, I thought it had been that, that you had sent for me to speak about.”

“ Did you really? But what more about the match, pray?”

“ O, a great deal more.”——

—“ Well?”

“ Well, it seems that two carriages were ordered to be built, and one of them in a mis-

take. The Colonel wanted to put a stop to the marriage till he had got all this settled; but it seems the gentleman would not wait upon any account. Then the bride is to have fifteen hundred pounds worth of jewels purchased for her, and the half of her father's silver plate."

"And no *cash*?" screamed Mrs Fife.

"O yes; some say fifty, some say sixty thousand pounds."

"Then that will be more than she will ever get. But what sort of dress is she to wear? for any sake tell me about the dress."

"Well, they say that that has not yet been decided—*all* the dresses are so uncommonly handsome, it seems."

"What! has she more than one gown for the ceremony?"

"O, Ma'am, they say she has half a dozen; and they also say, that they are all to be tried on upon the very morning, for fear of making a wrong choice the night before.—But, for my part, I confess I know nothing about these things."

"Nor I, for a long time," returned Mrs Fife.

“ And does the young gentleman appear very fond of her, think you ?”

“ Very much so ; and won’t let her out of his sight, they say, for more than five minutes at a time.”

“ There never was a silly Jenny but there was a silly Jocky :—You know *that*, I suppose ?” cried Mrs Fife.

“ That’s very true ; and I think we have now an instance.—It’s a most ridiculous match.”

“ But what says the gentleman’s family to all this, eh ?”

“ O, they seem all very agreeable ; and it is also said, that she is to stay all summer and winter at Castle Maringle, and then go to London in the Spring.”

“ Ay ! Go to London in the Spring ?”

“ So I have heard ; though others again say, that they don’t think that the new-married pair will agree a month.”

“ What in the world can be the reason of that ?”—and Mrs Fife looked serious.

“ So fond of dogs, cards, and horses, it is said ; and she so tenacious of her own comforts.”

" Indeed !—But pray, Miss M'Tavish, what are you about with the strings of your cloak ?"

" The old adage, my dear Madam, the best of friends must part."

" Ah, yes ; and perhaps you are afraid of walking home in the dark by yourself ?"

" Something of that kind. But, good night, Mrs Fife ; I shall come and drink tea with you some evening next week."

" Well, I shall be happy to see you. But, pray, is there any thing particular in the way between this and next week ?"

—" I declare it rains," cried Miss M'Tavish, getting into the lobby.

" Heavy ?"

" O, not very, I should hope. Bat, good night, good night.—You needn't trouble, John, with umbrellas ; I shall do very well without.—So good night, good night."

" A good night, is it ?—Stop, John, till I see. O heavens ! a perfect tempest ! just like the day of Mr Crimpfit's marriage—Luckily he always detested me !"——

“Miss M‘Tavish come again!” exclaimed Mrs Fife, hurrying aside a wicker basket choked to the brim with calling cards, visiting notes, recipes, hand-bills, and letters, with a perusal of the contents of which she was about to indulge herself between the acts of the breakfast. “What can be her motive for so early a visit?—My dear Miss M‘Tavish, what’s the matter?”

“Miss Brown,” answered Miss M‘Tavish, taking breath, “is to be married on Friday; and Miss Jemima Lumsdaine on Saturday.”

“Pray be seated, my dear Miss M‘Tavish—But to what, and to whom?”

“To neither more nor less than a half-pay Lieutenant.”

“To a half-pay Lieutenant!”

“It’s the case. I had it from Miss Patchwell the dress-maker, my old friend, whom the Misses Gros-de-nap called in to assist.”

“Well, there never—never was such another match.”

“I dare say there never *was* such another match.”

“But what say the father and mother?” resumed Mrs Fife.

“ Nothing.”

“ Nothing?”

“ Nothing. The news, when first announced to them, made them speechless. But they got up their spirits a little, and are now, I am told, in high hopes of their son-in-law’s honour and preferment through the help of a few thousand pounds; for there is much speculation in the army now-a-days, I am told.”

“ Amazing!”

“ Most amazing.”

“ Most amazing and prodigious!”

“ Rather a little more extraordinary than Miss Brown’s marriage yet, I suspect.”

“ But the man-at-arms must be rich, Miss M’Tavish?”

“ Not a sixpence. And, but for the Papa, must have shaken hands once more with the bride.”

“ Well, Miss M’Tavish, you are a nice clever creature to have got all this intelligence since last night.”

“ I believe the merit was all Miss Patchwell’s. She was down at me this morning by half-past

six o'clock. For it seems the thing is to be managed very close."

"And for what?"

"For particular reasons. I gave Miss Patchwell my solemn promise not to repeat them."

"Indeed! Well, something must be under all this."

"You are right: there *is* a great deal under all this."

"Well, then, get on."

"You have heard the story of Nancy Ellis, have you not?"

"No; but I should give the whole world to hear it."

"Well, in the whole world there is not such another adventure."

"My dear Miss M'Tavish, don't trifle, I beseech!"

"Well, Miss Nancy Ellis was some shop-wife's daughter, who having the luck to marry a man that for some piece of courtesy got knighted, Nancy Ellis came down, some twenty years after, not to visit her old acquaintance, but to despise them all, as Lady Fortunewheel.

There were some, however, who had risen like herself: these she treated with the most becoming and agreeable politeness, but received them all as utter strangers just introduced."

"Wonderful! But what has all this to do, pray, with the eldest Miss Lumsdaine and her marriage."

"Why, my dear Mrs Fife, this is precisely the way she intends to act."

"But what can she do, poor thing?"

"She is to know nobody, as the wife of a poor Lieutenant, but hopes to return as some Mrs General, and put every body to fear as well as to flight. In fact, the first intimation of the match to the uninitiated is to be found in the public papers. The bridal cake is to be an uncommonly small one, and only to be distributed amongst a few; while, to reduce the number of those who by right should be present at the marriage, the ceremony is to take place in the country. And to effect a still further separation between the dame and her fashionable friends, the parties are to jink about here and there, along with the rest of the troops, till,

having rendered themselves at length, now and forever, inaccessible, they are to return in the manner described."

"Miss Patchwell didn't tell you all this, did she?"

"She did not. But a few visits 'here and there,' and an additional cup of tea to some folks that you and I know of, gave me all the materials that were wanted:—and I think, if I am not mistaken, I know the folks, and for what they are fit."

"You know every thing, I must confess;—a second edition of Mr Madrake. But I forgot to inform you, that I am just looking over a few things before I leave town for Fife!"

"Leave town, my dear Mrs Fife!"

"Yes: The weather seems fine; Miss Leslie can't be prevailed on to leave her aunt; and I really think, sometimes, that this place is too much for my distracted nerves."

"Perhaps some day next week?"

"Next week! my dear, I am going to-night. I want to surprise both Miss Leslie and her aunt; and intend pouncing upon them in a

moment, merely for the purpose of finding out what they really can possibly be about. One would think that an easy chair, and an old wife, could be no entertainment for a girl of Sophia Leslie's age and spirits."

"O, she is remarkably quiet and good."

"I know she is a remarkable favourite of yours; but I was just thinking all night, that I should like to know, after all, what she has got to amuse herself with. In fact, I do believe it is because I cannot live now-a-days very well without her, that I feel so little at ease in her absence."

"In that case, Ma'am, I had better leave you."

"Why, yes: I have not got too much time left; and then, I have to send excuses to Lady Methodical and Mrs Regular about their next month's Tuesday and Wednesday dinners; for they always take in the ladies—for variety's sake, I suppose—at the last.—But, good morning, good morning, Miss M'Tavish; I think I hear Mrs Gregory's voice; and, you know, she leads me such an anxious life!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"I have a long letter from C—tr—r, extremely affecting to us both, but exceeding wild,—more wild than witty. I begin to have apprehensions about that worthy friend."

Letters of John Wilkes, Esq.

"DEAR MRS FIFE,

"Being aware of your total want of curiosity about the fate of passing events, I have coaxed myself to give you some account of what is going on with that fallen-back descendant of my ancestors—old change-penny M'Pech. All the actors, in these our times, are running after him; and in such various shapes and disguises, that they appear only to want *you*, to make up a company fit for the performance of a certain pseudo play I once went to see, called Punch.

"There is a dark closet, as I have been told, in every family, and *my* dark closet contains just one hundred thousand pounds; and it is in

the mean time my wonder that you, a party interested, should have remained so long indifferent to such a vast disposable force. For certainly such an event—in a quiet plain town like this, which owes its principal topics of conversation to more illustrious and active Regalities—ought to have been a subject of the last importance to you, as it has been with the rest; even though your bad cold and inflammation, assisted by your incredulity, had lifted you half-way up to Heaven already. I wish you, however, rather to contrive, with your usual dexterity, to continue a little longer upon the earth; to dismiss your nasty cough; and to exert yourself a little longer in looking after this fag-end of an old farthing—Josiah Manchcrum M'Pech.

“Recommending you, therefore, in the mean time, to the universal providence of the sacred band of wasps, hornets, shrimps, and squills, I take my leave in pronouncing myself your very faithful servant, THEOPHILUS MADRAKE.

“P. S.—Pray do not read the above, but come over here as fast as possible; as, if in time,

you will hear all about the queer report that is at present alive concerning old Mr —— I dare not say names. T. M."

To account, however, in some respects, for the promulgation of this hopeful despatch, it will be first necessary, by way of prelude, to introduce our readers to that very fashionable-looking castle, No. — M—— Place, on the outer vomitory of which might be read the important name—had names been now in vogue—of Mr Josiah M'Pech; the same asthmatic individual who had so lately emerged from that very underground and subterraneous laigh cellar somewhere in ——'s Close, north side of the Cowgate-Port.

This moving scion from the stock of M'Pech, however, might have expired where it had so long and unobtrusively flourished, but for one of those "rout him out" sort of occurrences, commonly denoted "a great fire," which plucked him from his cranny, and, in its extra violence, threw the wight amongst the more enlightened planets inhabiting that sublime quarter

of the north-west corner of the New Town—
M—— Place.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding a descent from personages of so much antiquity as to be lost in time, Mr Josiah M'Pech was one of those non-acknowledged sort of individuals who belong to nobody, and to whom, in return, apparently nobody belongs,—whom no school or academy can boast the honour of having reared,—and who umquhile has come at all knowledge and intelligence by the stern path of lone immutable experience. It has been observed, that cunning supplies in some minds the place of wisdom, and that the weakest intellects have sometimes the instinct of self-preservation in a degree that surpasses the efforts of mere ordinary reason and reflection. It was this genius, then, that caused Mr M'Pech, in time, to employ the industrious savings of his “laigh cellar” in more extensive and lucrative transactions; and, as he could always command a plentiful supply of money, was accustomed to feel his way, and cared not to infringe the economy of his life, his

finances had subsequently increased beyond all rational anticipation.

Mr M·Pech was now, however, somewhat cramped with years and labour, an asthmatic cough, and rheumatism; and he had already almost ventured upon the thought of retiring to a more peaceful asylum, when the fire arrived to cast him forth, as well as to consume, in its career, his whole stock, premises and utensils. It happened, too, that unless he exposed himself and his transactions to the prying eyes of the mistress of a "ta'en room," there was no other habitation, within the circle of his own dominions, where he might henceforth rest his bones, but that vast and handsome structure to which we have already alluded, and which had just been purchased by him as good property in a good place.

Mr M·Pech, then, tearing himself away from all that vast collection of dirt, dust, and rubbish, which the purifying element so frequently leaves behind it, now repaired incontinently to that fair *domum*, in a little corner of which had been hastily arranged as much new second-

hand furniture as would suffice for his present comfort. It happened, too, that the morning of removal was bright and fine; and, as Mr M'Pech seated himself to enjoy this new scene of his existence, he thought, as the sun danced his merry beams of light and heat over the large windows of the apartment, that his lost vigour might yet perhaps be restored by indulging, at least for a while, in this fair seat of existence. His nerves, which had lustily withstood all the conflagrations of the last half century, were not, moreover, so powerfully proof against the fire that had at length surrounded, and very nearly extinguished, himself; so that, having got his share of all the goodly pelf that was to be obtained by so long a residence in one part of the town, he might now, at his leisure, see what could be done in the other. The house which he now pretended to occupy was expected to sell well, so soon as the neighbouring mansions were all fitted up and inhabited, while the advance upon the purchase-money would sufficiently reimburse him for the sacrifice of a few years' rent. "And," as he himself ob-

served to some old ragman in his suite, "I shall have auld Nelly Sampson to look after things. She's a great drinker, I ken, and no owre honest sometimes; but she's *lucky*. And ance, when she went aff to the shearing, wi' her tale, because I wouldna gie her aboon a penny for carrying a thing they call a keg, I was rubbit o' six-and-thirty pounds; so I swore, that want again she never should."

Mr M^r Pech—whom nobody knew, whom nobody had ever heard of, and whose property had run into too many opposite channels to excite the interested attentions of any one set of persons more than another—had no sooner, however, taken his station in the centre of the Athenian *magnates*, than "a quick as lightning" discovery was made of funds and properties, the amount of which, in the energy of popular excitement, was magnified from one up to a couple of hundred thousand pounds; while, at the same time, there issued forth a corresponding stream of relations, friends, and connexions, whose slumbering affections were now aroused

by the possible chances of so plentiful a succession.

This crowd of electrified dormants, then, consisted of seven-and-twenty individuals of all sexes, sizes, fortunes, ages, and descriptions. To several of these, the light that now shone around the fortunes of M'Pech served to discover, that his grandmother and their's were cousins; and some, that his great-grandfather and their's were cousin's children; while others, again, were enabled to assert the fact, that *his* uncle's wife's son had married *their* uncle's father's aunt; and that his cousin's daughter was niece to their step-father's son. The Lumsdaines, amongst the rest, actually proved a relationship; while Mrs Fife contrived to establish herself amongst the intermarrying connexions. But the only true and faithful descendant was discovered to be Theophilus Madrake, who proved himself at once grand-nephew, and consequently the nearest of blood.

This much envied *eclaircissement* was not destined, however, to do the heir-apparent any service; for his maternal grand-uncle, Mr M'Pech,

had no sooner seen him, than he suddenly experienced all the symptoms of a mortal and invincible antipathy. Whether or not he shrunk from the quick glance of that penetrating eye which had detected faults in even faultless characters, or followed, in avoiding him, the dictates of that same superstition which had taught him to trust alone the fortune of that handmaid of happy memory, Nelly Sampson, we need not stop to discern. Madrake, though he wished it, could never afterwards obviate, far less overcome, the look of poisonous distaste with which he had at first been received and regarded.

Mr M'Pech, however, had no such dislike to the host who now thought proper to pour in upon him; and, as he loved long stories, in which his vanity fancied that he should find himself interested, he listened to the long raked-up anecdotes and history of his family connexions with great seeming pleasure and satisfaction. If he had a preference, in the meantime, for any one in particular more than another, it was in favour of the Lumsdaines, whose head had, in a patronizing mood, been formerly

very attentive to him. But here the correspondence stopped. Mr M'Pech would neither trouble himself to return Mr and Mrs Lumsdaine's visits, nor even add any thing to the bare civility of his own abstract welcome.

The next thing ascertained by the mob in the mean time was, that Mr M'Pech had made no will, nor seemingly even considered the necessity of taking such a step. Great management, therefore, must be required to get old change-penny to undertake the thing, without sacrificing the adviser's own interests in the matter. Still it was necessary to go on, while M'Pech's known detestation of Madrake served as a motive for encouragement. The cabal accordingly began by a pretty round assertion of Madrake's hopes and expectations from his death; which, they also ventured to affirm, Madrake had already presaged; agreeing, in their zeal for his destruction, to throw the blame of such an assertion from one to another, and *vice versa*, should ever the party thus scandalized think proper to make an impeachment. But there were many other difficulties to be overcome. Mr M'Pech had

always entertained an idea, that the making of a will was the making of a shroud; and though the party were sufficiently happy in exciting his suspicions, they could not, nevertheless, prevail with him to produce or execute the desired security in favour of themselves.

But Madrake's own expectations were not in the least to be improved by so wonderful an event; and it was, therefore, merely from a desire to annoy the cabal which demanded his exclusion, rather than through any expected good in Mrs Fife's interference, that he had written the letter which we have just read soliciting her presence; for that lady, who had not left town when Mr M'Pech's resurrection first eclated, had already paid him a sort of random visit, in order to substitute her own private title to his love. Miss M'Tavish's marriages, together with her piratical invasion of Miss Leslie and her grand-aunt, had in the mean time occurred to cut the visit short. She was now, however, at leisure; and Madrake's eccentric epistle found the field unoccupied. The postscript, in particular, as it was addressed to her own particular genius,

excited by far the greatest share of her attention.

“ Wasps,—hornets,—shrimps,—squills !!! ” she repeated, re-reading the passage with an immense additional accession of earnestness and deliberation—“ Monstrous ! But what can *they* have to do with the business ? I can understand every thing but the squills and the wasps.—Give me my writing-desk, John ; and tell Margaret I shall want her in my dressing-room immediately.”

“ Here,” she added, writing and coughing time about, “ take this over to The Leazes. I want Miss Leslie to go to town with me directly, though, I declare, I am scarce able to stand. And, by the bye, John, when you are there, find out what they are all about ; and whether they have any body staying with them just now ; for I thought I saw something like a jaunting car pass here yesterday.—And d’ye hear, John,” (recalling her flying Mercury), “ *insist* upon knowing what it is that is to prevent her, should there be any mistake about her not coming ;

for, really, a journey in such weather, and to such a place, might well make her think."

But Mrs Fife calculated right when she believed that nothing was impossible for Miss Leslie, whenever or wherever she could hope to please or oblige. That young lady arrived at the Hall, before Mrs Fife's own servant, who had paused at the tippling-house at the turnpike, could return to give any account of his mission.

"Well, my dear Sophia, are you ready to go to town?" was Mrs Fife's first salutation.

"Quite ready, my dear Madam."

"So dexterous!" said Mrs Fife, "I never met any body like you before. But how did it happen that you did not know what to make of yourself otherwise, my dear?"

"And yet I was not idle, my dear Mrs Fife."

"Ah! so adroit! so indefatigably ingenious and expert!—Pray, what *were* you about now?"

"You know the duties of a housekeeper, my dear Madam; only that."

"Only that! my dear child, that is nothing.

See here ! look ! read this ! Now, what do you think *I* have got to do ?”

“ *It is very odd,*” said the young lady, “ and the P. S. too, seems rather curious.”

“ That P. S. hurries me to Edinburgh this moment,—sends me off like a shot. That curious report, who can he mean by it ? But I shall soon know ; for I would rather be at the bottom of that than touch M^r Pech’s two hundred thousand pounds,—though Madrake, by the bye, calls it only one. Still and on, whom he can possibly mean by Mr Blank, or what he intends that I should understand by a ‘ curious report,’ baffles, I will confess, my most plausible conjectures to comprehend.”

“ You will be enabled to comprehend every thing soon enough, my dear Mrs Fife ;” and Miss Leslie turned towards the fine arched window, a little beyond which Mrs Fife’s coach-horses were now industriously prancing to divert themselves.

“ O, are they all ready ?” exclaimed Mrs Fife, peeping over her shoulder. “ I must ring for Mrs Gregory.—Well, Mrs Gregory, I shall be

back—let me see—I really don't know when. Only, amongst other things, you must keep an account of every body that comes here; and watch well whether that young calf will, or will not, keep within the little wire paling; for I shall be perfectly miserable till I know how it is to get on. Did it make any exertion last night?"

"I shall inquire," said Mrs Gregory.

"O yes, pray do inquire. Does that horse always get restless, Jacob? It seems a most fractious beast.—My dear Miss Leslie, why do you prefer lying back in the carriage to sitting forward?"

"He's very quiet, for ord'nar, Mem. But to-day he will not be kept steady ony ways."

"That is a trick of yours, Jacob. But I am not in *just* so great a hurry as you would wish me, for all that."

"We can just let him alone then, Mem," said Jacob, descending from his seat, and advancing upon the walk.

"Have mercy on us! we are killed!!!" vociferated both ladies, as the horses ambled on with the carriage, in imitation of their master.

“ O, Jacob ! Jacob ! this trick is a hundred times worse than the first.—Pray, what were they like when they were toddling away without a head ?”

“ They were not likely to toddle far with such a tail,” mumbled Jacob. But neither ladies had the benefit of the remark. Miss Leslie was adjusting sundry parcels and boxes, which she had carried with her from The Leazes ; and her companion was now over head and ears in a host of cross-questions and inquiries concerning the more than suspected peregrinations of the unfatted calf, now confined within the tiny enclosures of the wire park, as it was styled, stretching away to the left of that resplendent edifice called Fife-hall ; and from which she was only diverted by an intimation given by Jacob to John, and then from John to Jacob, that the parties were already much too late for the last sailing steam-packet.

“ Too late, are we ? Then, Mrs Gregory, I must not answer you another word. I must first find out whether we really *are* too late for

the passage.—So, get on, get on.—Mrs Gregory! Mrs Gregory!"——

Jacob's whipship, however, had by this time finally separated the two female economists; and the lady turned her artillery upon the defenceless Miss Leslie. Madame de Coigny is said never to have travelled without having first secreted a dead body in the boat of her carriage; and certainly it could not have been better, nor more completely dissected, than was the whole life, history, and occupations of this devoted young lady, who, on her part, would have gladly put up with any sort of body on this occasion, rather than that of her voracious and never to be satisfied acquaintance, Mrs Fife.

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The lairds of Fife

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